

**A CRITICAL POLICY TRAJECTORY STUDY OF  
LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING IN BUNBURY,  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1998-2000**

by

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This thesis is a report of an investigation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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# **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

Signed

Murdoch University  
November 2009

*“The quality of research from a critical theory standpoint is not based on the ability to tell a good tale but on the ability to participate in a human struggle – a struggle that is not always vicious or visible but a struggle that is always present. Research should be part of a larger human struggle rooted in the right to participate in the construction of meanings that affect our lives.”* (Deetz cited in Putnam, Bantz, Deetz, Mumby, & Van Maanen, 1993, p. 227)

## ABSTRACT

The Local Area Education Planning (*LAEP*) Framework was released in Western Australia in 1997 and enacted in the regional centre of Bunbury, Western Australia, in the period 1998-2000. In a similar way to many other policies within Australia and overseas, *LAEP* aims to reform and restructure the public education system through involving community participation in educational decision-making. The enactment of *LAEP* was a highly contested process over the nature of community participation and a widespread view at the local level, that the Education Department of Western Australia had a pre-determined agenda to close schools and to introduce a senior campus and middle schools. In contrast to the major regional centres and metropolitan areas of Western Australia, where there have been school closures and amalgamations, as well as the introduction of middle schools and senior campuses, the *LAEP* outcomes for the Bunbury Education District, on this occasion, did not result in major structural changes to the delivery of education services. Located in the broad domain of critical social research, this study applies a critical ethnographic methodology and draws on 25 semi-structured in-depth interviews and secondary data sources to examine how key participants understood, experienced and responded to the enactment of *LAEP*. A Critical Policy Trajectory Framework informed by critical social theory, provides the theoretical lens through which to describe and explain the *LAEP* policy formation and enactment process at the macro structural (global, nation-state, state), middle-range agenda-building and micro lived experience levels of the policy process. A major conclusion of the study is that the social activism at the micro level of the policy trajectory interrupted the introduction of the Minister's and the Education Department of Western Australia's education reform agenda in Bunbury. However, the macro level discursive constraints associated with global level economising discourses and the centralisation tendencies of the neo-liberal state saw the Education Department of Western Australia's Central Office policy elites steer at a distance (Kickert, 1995) to produce a policy settlement that retained the option for the State to pursue a neo-liberal education restructuring agenda in the longer term. To move beyond policy analysis frameworks that describe and analyse the factors influencing policy, this study synthesises some of the key ideas, insights and lessons emerging from the research, to develop a critically engaged policy perspective in the areas of policy, research and practice.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AEC	Australian Education Council
AGOs	Alternative Government Organisations
BPS	Bunbury Primary School
BSHS	Bunbury Senior High School
Coalition	Liberal/National Party Coalition Government
CPTF	Critical Policy Trajectory Framework
DET	Department of Education and Training of Western Australia
ECU	Edith Cowan University
EDWA	Education Department of Western Australia
Framework	Integrated Multilevel Policy Analysis Framework
IGOs	Intergovernmental Organisations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPS	Independent Public Schools
<i>LAEP Framework</i>	Local Area Education Planning Framework
<i>LAEP</i>	Local Area Education Planning Process
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
P & C	Parents and Citizens' Association
SBDMGs	School Based Decision Making Groups
SSTUWA	State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia
TAFE	South West College of Technical and Further Education
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examination Scores
TMOs	Transnational Media Organisations
TNCs	Transnational Corporations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WACSSO	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations

## **Referencing Note**

1. In this thesis the State (first letter capitalised) refers to the State of Western Australia. The state (without capitalisation) refers to a nation's collective political governance or a theoretical representation of ideas in relation to the state.
2. When referring to a particular Government in relation to Western Australia or elsewhere, Government is capitalised. When government is referred to in a generic sense lower case is used.
3. In relation to position titles, the Principal is capitalised when referring to a specific Principal. Lower case is used to represent principals in a generic sense.
4. Prior to 1987 the Western Australian State education bureaucracy was titled the Education Department of Western Australia. During the period 1987-2001 the Ministry of Education of Western Australia was renamed to Education Department of Western Australia and then Department of Education of Western Australia and in 2003 to Department of Education and Training of Western Australia. The title of the Western Australian state education bureaucracy used at a particular point in time is used in this thesis.

# CHAPTER ONE

## LOCAL AREA EDUCATION POLICY: SETTING THE SCENE

### INTRODUCTION

This study examines the enactment of the *Local Area Education Planning Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) (hereafter *LAEP Framework*) by the Education Department of Western Australia (hereafter EDWA) in the regional centre of Bunbury, Western Australia, in the period 1998-2000. Adopting a critical policy trajectory approach this ethnographic study explores how the enactment of *LAEP* was experienced and understood by the participants across the different levels of the policy process. In contrast to traditional, linear, top-down and single-level approaches to the policy process (Allison, 1971; Easton, 1971; C. Jones, 1970; Lindblom, 1968; H. Simon, 1957), this research is theoretically informed by critical social theory and draws on the broad domain of critical policy analysis (Ball, 1994a; Henry, 1993; Marshall, 1997; Prunty, 1984, 1985; Taylor, 1997; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997; Vidovich, 2001) to develop a Critical Policy Trajectory Framework (hereafter CPTF) to investigate the enactment of *LAEP*. The policy process is conceptualised as a multi-layered process with policy making constantly evolving through macro, middle-range and micro levels (or contexts) of the policy enactment process (Ball, 1994a; Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992; Vidovich, 2001, 2007).

This chapter commences with background information on education reform in Western Australia since the mid-1980s, with particular emphasis upon the emergence of *LAEP* in 1997 and its enactment in Bunbury the following year. Following this, I discuss the aims of the study, the research questions and my own positioning as an evolving critical policy researcher. I locate the *LAEP* study within the domain of critical policy analysis and outline some of the key ideas from the critical education policy analysis literature of the 1980s and the policy sociology literature of the 1990s that have shaped my thinking about undertaking critical policy analysis. In the final section, the significance of the research and an overview of the chapters that comprise this study are presented.

## **BACKGROUND: EDUCATION REFORM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

Beginning in the late-1980s and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the quest for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability has resulted in policies aimed at restructuring the organisation of education systems and the delivery of public schooling in most liberal democracies including Australia (Blackmore, 1993; Lingard, Knight, & Porter, 1995; Yeatman, 1993), the United States of America (Lawton, 1992; Murphy & Adams, 1998; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998) and the United Kingdom (Ball, 1994a; Ozga, 2000a; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). One of the most prevalent policy changes has been the decentralisation and devolution of the authority and administration of educational management from central bureaucracies to local schools, and the incorporation of community participation in school governance (Blackmore, 1993; Gamage, 1996; Knight, Lingard, & Porter, 1993; Popkewitz, 1996; K. Watson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). The rhetoric of restructuring foregrounds the notion that decentralisation and devolution of authority to schools and local communities enhances local control over educational agendas in a way that is more responsive to local educational and cultural needs. This rhetoric also suggests that education restructuring may result in less bureaucratic decision-making and more relevant, accountable and effective educational outcomes and services (Ball, 2001; Blackmore, 1993; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Knight & Lingard, 1997; Smyth, 2001).

The policy trend toward devolution and greater community participation in educational decision-making commenced in Western Australia in the mid-1980s. A policy ensemble (Ball, 1993) of inquiries and reports recommended that more efficient and effective schools would emanate from the devolution of administrative responsibility to the EDWA District Offices and the development of self-managing schools (see Chapter Five). *Better Schools in Western Australia: A Programme for Improvement* (Pearce, 1987) (hereafter *Better Schools*) initially provided the restructuring framework. Central to this education restructuring policy manoeuvre was the incorporation of community participation in local educational decision-making (Beazley, 1984; Pearce, 1987). Since the early-1990s, EDWA has continued to develop and implement a number of restructuring policies in an attempt to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of education in public schools in Western Australia. These policies include *School Renewal* (Halden, 1991), *Ensuring a Quality Education for All Students in Western Australia: A Policy Document of Rationalisation of Schools* (Ministry of

Education, 1994) (hereafter *School Rationalisation Programme*) and the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a).

Between 1994 and 1996, the *School Rationalisation Programme*, which was the forerunner to *LAEP*, aimed to improve resource management and to provide quality education by closing or amalgamating less productive (smaller) schools and reinvesting the revenue raised back into the state school system (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 5). Commenting on the outcomes from the *School Rationalisation Programme*, EDWA's Director of Finance stated that "the Education Department was unsuccessful in achieving any meaningful site disposals to release those resources required to provide educational opportunities in growth areas" (EDWA Director of Finance, 1999, p. 2). The Auditor General's report (1998) identified the following limitations of the *School Rationalisation Programme*:

An unfavourable aspect of the rationalisation process was the competition and divisions created between schools and amongst communities. Frequently during this examination parents and teachers commented on how the rationalisation process resulted in community discord. Comments were also frequently made that the rationalisation process was overly focussed on financial gains of restructuring without emphasis on educational benefits. (Auditor General of Western Australia, 1998, p. 35)

The most recent restructuring initiative, *LAEP*, is a component of the Delivery of Schooling Strategy in the *Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000*, (EDWA, 1997d) (hereafter *Plan*) document that outlines the strategic objectives for the Western Australian state education system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The *LAEP Framework*, which was released in September 1997, shifted the focus of planning from individual schools to a cluster of schools in an educational district to improve the management of the delivery of curriculum and resources and thereby to improve educational outcomes for all students (EDWA, 1997a, p. 1). The *LAEP Framework* outlines a set of key principles and the stages of the planning process to be used to produce a *LAEP Draft Options Plan* for the provision of public education in an education district (EDWA, 1997a, pp. 11-12).

The *LAEP* strategy has resulted in a significant overhaul of the State's education system. In the major regional centres and metropolitan areas of Western Australia, we have witnessed school closures and amalgamations, as well as new internal structures in the form of middle schools and senior campuses (Moroz, 2003). For example, in the

Cannington Education District, in the eastern suburbs of Perth, three senior high schools were closed and an upper secondary senior college and two middle schools were established (Boland, Cavanagh, & Bellar, 2001, p. 2). While the stated aim of the policy is to improve the provision of educational services throughout the state, critics have claimed that it is a repackaged version of the *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ashworth, 1997, November 17, p. 25). Commenting on the success of *LAEP* in rationalising school sites relative to the earlier *School Rationalisation Programme*, EDWA's Director of Finance stated that *LAEP* "has proved to be extremely successful" (EDWA Director of Finance, 1999, p. 2).

The South West regional centre of Bunbury, Western Australia, was one of the last major regional centres to undertake *LAEP*, a process that occurred over a three year time frame (1998-2000). The rhetoric surrounding *LAEP* required that EDWA personnel collaborate with community representatives to produce a *LAEP Draft Options Plan* which was responsive to local needs (EDWA, 1997a, p. 10). *LAEP* was characterised by high levels of conflict between EDWA senior management and community representatives (see Chapter Eight). Areas of grievance between EDWA personnel and community representatives related to concerns that EDWA and the Minister for Education had a pre-determined agenda for education in Bunbury and the process used by EDWA officials to develop the *LAEP* Options for restructuring secondary education. Prior to the commencement of *LAEP*, senior personnel from EDWA held several meetings and publicly advocated the closure of Bunbury Senior High School (hereafter BSHS) and Bunbury Primary School (hereafter BPS) as well as the introduction of a new senior campus and several middle schools (Bunbury Primary School Parents and Citizens, 1998). Many of the parents, teachers and non-teachers insisted that *LAEP* policy guidelines and processes should be followed and that genuine community participation should occur before any position was taken regarding education restructuring in Bunbury.

In June 2000, community representatives pushed for a community ballot to determine educational Options for the Bunbury Education District. The outcome of the vote clearly signalled a lack of community support for the closure of BSHS and the introduction of a new senior campus (Bunbury District Education Office, 2000a, p. 1). On September 20, 2000, the Liberal/National Party Coalition (hereafter Coalition) Government's Minister for Education Colin Barnett announced that the "status quo" would continue in relation to the provision of public education in Bunbury. He also announced that there would be a

new middle school at Eaton, an outer suburb of Bunbury, which would provide for Years 8-10 students (Minister for Education, 2000). While the *LAEP* outcome of a middle school in Eaton rather than the construction of a new Year 8-12 senior high school was highly controversial, *LAEP* did not result in major structural changes in the form of school closures or the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury. This *LAEP* outcome in Bunbury contrasted with the outcomes in the other education districts areas across the State and differed from EDWA's preferred policy direction of school closures, amalgamations and the introduction of senior campuses and middle schools (Ashworth, 1998, June 30; Moroz, 2003).

In the lead up to the 2001 State Government election, *LAEP* continued to attract political attention. The Western Australian Labor Party's education policy stated that "the Labor Party supports parents in the Bunbury region in their desire to retain their high schools in the community" (Western Australian Labor Party, 2001, p. 6). Details of specific policy commitments in relation to education restructuring in Bunbury included to:

- retain the three existing senior high schools as Years 8-12 schools;
- ensure that planning for the new high school at Eaton includes Years 11 and 12 students; and
- identify sites and carry out preliminary planning for a new high school in the Dalyellup area. (Western Australian Labor Party, 2001, p. 6)

Despite overwhelming community rejection of school closures and the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools, *LAEP* community representatives were sceptical about the government's willingness, irrespective of political party, to respect and implement community sanctioned *LAEP* outcomes. There was a strong view that bureaucratic and political preferences for major structural changes to the provision of education in the Bunbury Education District would ultimately prevail.

While this initial phase of *LAEP* has been completed across Western Australia, the agenda to continue changing the internal structures of schools in the Bunbury Education District resurfaced during the period I was undertaking this research (2004-2008). In June 2003, the Department of Education and Training of Western Australia (hereafter DET) Bunbury District Office following the approval of the Central Office School Planning and Infrastructure Committee, undertook another *LAEP* process in Bunbury (EDWA Administrator, 2004, p. 9). In contrast to the 1998-2000 *LAEP* process, which is the focus



of this study, DET did not engage parents, teachers and non-teacher representatives in the development of the *LAEP* Options for the *LAEP* process in Bunbury throughout 2003-2004. The reason for the exclusion of these interest groups is explained as follows:

On the advice of Department Executive the planning group was an 'in-house' group ... The decision to restrict membership ... was based on the Department's previous experience ... [which] was completed in 2000 [and] left many community members and Department employees bitter and with a loss of confidence in the process. Corporate memory was a key factor in determining this project as high risk ... the risk of consulting the community at the early stages was considered greater than the outrage likely to occur if the Minister put the options directly to the community at a later stage. (EDWA Administrator, 2004, pp. 11, 15)

In May 2004, in an article on the front page of the *Bunbury Mail*, the Labor Member for Bunbury, who had previously opposed the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury, was cited as the primary source of a news report which stated, "Bunbury is set to get a desperately needed new high school ... and not any old traditional school ... the preferred option is a 20 million dollar Year 11 and 12 campus to house up to 500 students adjoining the South West College of TAFE" (Maclean, 2004, March 31, p. 1). A former EDWA senior administrator from one of the senior high schools, who had participated in the 1998-2000 *LAEP* process, responded to calls for the establishment of a senior campus in a letter to the *Bunbury Mail* titled *Community Insulted by School Approach*. The administrator made the following points about the *LAEP* process and the renewed assertion that a senior campus was required to meet the needs of the Bunbury Education District:

Your assumption that the 'preferred option is a Year 11/12 campus adjoining TAFE is the result of an exhaustive study to find the best educational solutions to Bunbury's high school needs' ... reflects the economic rationalist spin about secondary education delivery in Bunbury since the Local Area Education process was first floated in 1998.

There was a resounding 'no' to the senior campus proposal by combining communities of the Bunbury secondary schools, based on ideals centred around the notion of community values of belonging, ownership and involvement ... At no stage has the Education Department, nor the Government been able to show that a senior campus will deliver better educational outcomes, nor maintain the sense of community.

.... the reason parents' and teachers' opinions are currently being ignored by the Education Department and the Government, is because the last time the local community was asked its opinion, the answer did not fit the bureaucratic/political preference.

To keep the community in the dark until decisions have been made is not politically wise, as the last Local Area Planning process illustrated, and to keep coming up with the same question until the preferred answer is given, is in my opinion insulting to our Bunbury community. (Former School Administrator, 2004, April 14, p. 11)

In August 2004, the Labor Minister for Education Alan Carpenter announced in the Western Australian Parliament that he had approved "local education plans to build a senior campus in Bunbury" (T. Watson, 2004, August 18, p. 1). Manea Senior College, which accommodates 600 students and is on a site co-located with the South West College of Technical and Further Education (hereafter TAFE) and Edith Cowan University (hereafter ECU) opened in Bunbury in 2009.

It is against this background that I explore the politics of participating in the *LAEP* process at the local level throughout 1998-2000. I am also interested in understanding why and how the structuring of the delivery of educational services in the Bunbury Education District continued to be portrayed as inconclusive and contestable despite the Minister for Education conceding in 2000 that Bunbury would retain the "status quo" (Minister for Education, 2000), a position which was also endorsed by the Western Australian Labor Party at the end of 2000 (Western Australian Labor Party, 2001, p. 6).

## **AIM OF STUDY**

The *LAEP Framework*, (EDWA, 1997a) like many other policies within Australia and overseas, aims to reform and restructure educational systems under the auspices of Central Office directives (Knight & Lingard, 1997; Knight et al., 1993; Lingard et al., 1995). The *LAEP* policy reflects the contradictory tension between a "top-down" and "bottom-up" approach to educational restructuring within a devolved system of educational management (Lingard et al., 1995, p. 83). On the one hand, local schools and communities are empowered to use participatory decision-making structures and, on the other hand, are required to work within centrally defined pre-emptive policies and outcomes. Given this context a key focus of this research is to explain how the recent shifts in educational policy in Western Australia to locally devolved systems of educational management characterised by community participation in decision-making

processes were experienced by community representatives throughout the *LAEP* process. In other words, the aim of this study is to understand how a particular instance of policy in practice captures the “messiness” (Ball, 1993, p. 12) and “localized complexity” (Ball, 1994a, p. 14) of top-down management-inspired reform. To do this, I will draw on the tradition of critical policy analysis to illuminate the emergence and enactment of EDWA’s *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) in Bunbury, Western Australia, in the period 1998-2000.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question for this study is:

*How did the key participants understand, experience and respond to the enactment of LAEP from 1998-2000 in Bunbury, Western Australia?*

Consistent with a “socially critical” (Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid, & Shacklock, 2000, p. 113) and “openly ideological” (Lather, 1986a, p. 63) orientation, I want to “dig beneath surface appearances” (L. Harvey, 1990, p. 14) to illuminate the “how”, “why”, “what” (Kenway, 1990, p. 24) and “why now” of critical policy analysis (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 39). These questions are consistent with Ball’s (1994c, p. 109) approach to uncovering the “infrastructure of power/knowledge” in the policy process: the “how” question deals with “accounts of what happened, who said what, whose voices were important”; and the “why” question is concerned with the way “types of knowledge” justify “certain policy solutions and exclude others”. Following Ball (1994c, p. 109), I also incorporate the “because” question which explores the political, economic and institutional pressures which serve as structural and relational constraints and influences upon policy making.

Throughout this research I explore the following questions.

- What conditions influence the initiation of policy?
- On whose terms is policy adopted and enacted, and why?
- How is policy justified and legitimated?
- How are the competing interests and contestations named and negotiated?
- Whose interests are served?
- Whose values are reflected in policy?
- Why is policy introduced at particular moments?

- What relevance does the policy have for different groups of people in relation to class, gender, race and disability?
- How is policy enacted at the local level and with what consequences?
- What are the lessons for communities and policy makers?

In the next section, I discuss my positioning as an evolving critical policy researcher and my motivation for undertaking research into *LAEP*. I locate the *LAEP* study within the domain of critical policy analysis and outline some of the key ideas from the critical education policy analysis literature of the 1980s, and the policy sociology literature of the 1990s that have shaped my thinking and guided my development of the CPTF to interrogate the enactment of *LAEP*.

## **LOCATING THE RESEARCHER: BEING OPEN ABOUT INTERESTS**

Penney's (2001) contention that we should declare our personal agendas for undertaking policy research resonates with me as an important starting point and a reflexive move in doing critical policy analysis on *LAEP*. She notes:

The question 'why do you want to do this?' is one that may well be overshadowed and inadequately explored in the initial stages of developing research, with attention instead focusing on the 'how, where and when' to proceed with a project. There seems a continuing reluctance to accept that as researchers we can and indeed should acknowledge and actively reflect upon our personal agendas. (p. 1)

I concur with Penny's (2001, p. 1) observation that the motivation for embarking on policy research in the field of education is frequently driven by (either implicitly or explicitly) an interest and commitment to bring about change. In a similar vein, Griffiths (1998, p. 67) suggests that change can be identified at both the "individual (personal and ethical) *and* the collective (public and political)" levels. Central to this perspective is the point that ethical and political issues are an integral part of any change brought about through policy research processes (Ozga, 2000b; Pole & Morrison, 2003). It is important, therefore, to reflect upon the purpose for undertaking research as well as to anticipate the ways policy and practice may be affected. It is also necessary to openly declare and address that the research endeavour is by no means value-free. As Jackson (2000) explains:

Conventionally, of course, the adherence to a committed political position is inconsistent with the neutrality and objectivity that is

required of academic inquiry. For others, the suggestion that academics can ever be ‘neutral’ is itself untenable, once the relationship between knowledge and power is accepted. While many would accept that there is no contradiction between political commitment and scientific rigour, few would now be prepared to defend the ‘neutrality’ of social science. (p. 55)

It is important, therefore, when undertaking social research to acknowledge how our personal and political agendas that underlie our ongoing commitment to our research work (Penney, 2001, p. 1) and how those agendas will influence the way we conceptualise what we are researching (Sparkes, 1992) and how we conduct our research (Travers, 2001).

### **Bringing a Critical Policy Lens to *LAEP***

My decision to undertake research into *LAEP* is partly in response to requests from community representatives who wanted the *LAEP* process to be recorded and placed on the public record. They also wanted attempts by the authorities to silence and marginalise their voices exposed. In addition, many of the community representatives who participated in this research wanted their multiple acts of resistance to their marginalisation to contribute to the body of knowledge about socially transformative agendas in policy analysis and community empowerment processes. Furthermore, they wanted this research made available to EDWA officials in a way that provides formal educational feedback about their experience of participating in *LAEP* as community representatives.

For me, undertaking research into *LAEP* is also about being open in identifying my commitment to critical policy research and my belief that policy making processes which seek to engage a cross section of the community should be driven by, and embrace, the spirit of “radical democracy” (Gale & Densmore, 2003, p. 5). An agenda to democratise policy processes takes as its starting point the promotion of cooperative social relations through explicitly recognising and valuing “difference *and* similarity” between groups with “internal cultural likenesses relating with other groups from whom they may differ” (Gale & Densmore, 2003, p. 5). This orientation is, therefore, fundamentally concerned with working towards socially just forms of community practice. While precise notions of social justice are notoriously elusive, concepts such as fairness, equality, respect, dignity, empowerment, participation and agency inform my understanding of social justice. As a critical policy researcher, challenging oppressive structures and exposing and

deconstructing how dominant discourses work to silence and marginalise actors in the policy process is central. I am committed to not only developing understandings of the practices associated with how policies are formulated and enacted, but also “*why* they have been constructed in certain ways, and *who* and *what categories* of individuals benefit from these decisions” (A. Dewar, 1990, p. 74). This means identifying the processes associated with how particular meanings attached to policies become accepted as commonsense and legitimate and then determining whose interests are primarily represented (Penney, 2001, p. 3). For example, my research process offers an opportunity to reflect, interrogate and interrupt the way that the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) as a policy text portrays the policy process as a linear, value-free, rational and sequential process that, if followed, will produce the best plan for a school district. As Ball (cited in Troman, 1999) explains, this simplistic linear approach assumes that:

Policies as texts conjure up pristine and magical thought worlds of practice-ideal settings in which the intentions of policy-makers enter smoothly and unhindered into the minds and actions of the practitioners. (p. 34)

In contrast, a more complex view of policy informed by critical social theory suggests that there is not a linear relationship between policy and effects. As Dalton, Draper, Weeks and Wiseman (1996, p. 19) contend, “policy-making is a social and political process shaped by underlying structures of power” involving compromises between different interests as well as contests over meanings. Whose voices are heard and whose values are recognised or “authoritatively allocated” are key issues (Prunty, 1984, p. 135). These approaches are significant for my research because they recognise the issues of power and control, the “complexity”, “messy realities” and chaos of policy processes (Ball, 1990, p. 9) as well as the multiple readings of policy that are enacted in local educational sites (Ball, 1993).

### **Being a Player in the Policy Game**

As a critical policy researcher, a parent of a child whose school was engaged in *LAEP*, and as a friend and colleague of many of the community representatives, I have a commitment to social transformation driven by a concern not to perpetuate the unequal power relations which characterised the *LAEP* process. As Humphries (2000 p. 184) observes, all research processes implicate us in different levels of power relations which we need to acknowledge and address. I agree with Penney (2001, p. 4) that the research

process offers researchers “invaluable opportunities to be active players in the policy process.” She further argues that “the potential for research to ‘have an impact’ upon thinking and actions will always be limited if we restrict our vision in terms of the *ways* in which, and the *times* at which we legitimately look to make that impact” (Penney, 2001, p. 4). To this end, my research process offers an opportunity not to be silenced about *LAEP* but to engage in dialogue with policy actors through the fieldwork process in ways that can challenge inequities inherent in the dominant discourses and meaning structures of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and the nature of the practices that emerged.

What I suggest, therefore, is that if we view policy research as imbued with power and, ultimately, as a political act, then “interviews as conversations” (Burgess, 1984, p. 101) need to be regarded as political conversations, with all the attendant tensions, contradictions, dilemmas and possibilities (Penney, 2001). Neal’s (1995, pp. 523-527) reflexive account of her “lack of voice” in interview settings with powerful people reveals that if we do not “explore spaces for dialogue” which fieldwork may present, we may well have let pass an opportunity to become a “player in the policy game.” In researching “sites of struggle”, as Penney (2001, p. 8) suggests, we need to connect with and “engage in the struggle.” In regard to this research project, this requires revealing my personal and political values as well as seeking opportunities to pursue those interests throughout the research. While I acknowledge the discomfort and tensions related to doing so and the pressure to portray a politically neutral posture (Tooley & Darby, 1998), these factors should not inhibit the seeking of innovative and effective ways to connect with policy actors so that inequities are exposed and new ways to conceptualise policy issues emerge. In not doing so, as critical researchers we run the risk of marginalising ourselves and reducing the potential impact of the research (Neal, 1995; Penney, 2001).

### **Engaging Critical Policy Theory and Practice**

My interest in policy analysis and the development of theoretical tools to engage in policy analysis is longstanding. For my Master (Honours) Thesis, I undertook a case study which examined the policy processes associated with the introduction of the *Crime (Serious and Repeat Offenders) Sentencing Act 1992* and the *Criminal Law Amendment Act 1992* (hereafter *Sentencing Acts*). I shared the sentiments expressed by Fulcher (cited in Taylor, 1997, p. 24) when she states “the discrepancy between the literature and the political reality I saw, encouraged me to be sceptical about most of the conceptual and

theoretical platforms the literature offered.” Unfortunately, most commonly used policy development models and frameworks derive from functionalist theoretical perspectives which, like the *LAEP Framework*, (EDWA, 1997a) depict policy as a linear, technocratic process.

The limitations of traditional policy analysis approaches are extensively documented in the policy analysis literature. Critical policy analysts, such as Prunty (1984, 1985), Grimley (1986) and Taylor et al. (1997), argue that the failure to recognise the role of ideology, power, values and issues of structural inequality implies a consensual value-free policy process. Other writers also point to the limitations of approaches that adopt a single level of analysis of the policy process (for example, whether they addressed the macro, middle-range or micro level) and argue that to adequately explain how policy is developed requires an analysis of all three levels (Dalton et al., 1996; Gale, 1994; Haimes, 1993; Ham & Hill, 1993; Taylor et al., 1997). For these reasons, I developed an Integrated Multilevel Policy Analysis Framework (O'Sullivan, 1999) (hereafter Framework) for my Masters (Honours) thesis to analyse the introduction of the *Sentencing Acts*. This Framework incorporates three levels of analysis and draws on Prunty's (1984, 1985) critical policy perspective that emphasises the role of power, ideology and issues of structural inequality in the policy formation process. While my Framework draws on a socially critical theoretical paradigm, it failed to address, at a theoretical level, the relationship between the three levels of policy analysis, macro level global influences and a post-structural approach to power.

The recent work in the field of education policy sociology has extended my understanding of education policy making beyond limited linear views of the relationship between policy making and implementation and the roles of policy makers and practitioners. Major influences on my current thinking include the work of policy analysts such as Stephen Ball and his colleagues (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992) and Vidovich (2001, 2007) who offer alternative readings of these relationships. Their reconstructions of policy production, its enactment and its effects convey a complex, contested and relational process where the demarcation between policy making and implementation is unclear and involves many sites and actors, both inside and outside of education systems. Policy, from this perspective, is therefore, more about “... a *process* than a product” (Ozga, 2000b, p. 2). These emerging ideas challenge traditional conceptions and models of the policy process as well as positivist research



methodologies. The challenge is to develop policy approaches and research designs capable of conveying the complexity of the multiple levels, issues and diverse interests that interact and shape policy processes. Education policy analysts, such as Ball (1990, 1993, 1994a) and Bowe, et al (1992) and Vidovich (2007), move beyond traditional approaches to understand policy processes by adopting an eclectic ensemble of theories and ideas and to engage with critical modernist theory as well as poststructuralism.

These contemporary poststructural ideas about policy analysis in the education policy sociology literature have enabled me to rework my original understanding of critical policy analysis. In particular, the notion of policy as both “readerly” and “writerly” (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-11) and discourse as power/knowledge in the policy process (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992) offer ways of rethinking my earlier Framework to reflect more contemporary approaches to policy analysis. This study provides an opportunity to continue my engagement with policy theory and practice. It explores how ideas from both critical modernist theory and poststructuralism can enhance my original Framework for understanding *LAEP*, as well as the implications of *LAEP* for extending theoretical understandings of policy processes (see Chapter Two). To this end a critical policy trajectory approach is adopted in this research to examine how *LAEP* was enacted, experienced and understood by participants in the regional centre of Bunbury, Western Australia in the period from 1998-2000.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study has the potential to make a significant contribution to knowledge in the field of critical policy analysis in the following ways. First, the study becomes a small chapter in the history of education in Australia in general, and in the State of Western Australia in particular. By presenting a “fine-grained” analysis of *LAEP* within a “broader structural analysis” (Taylor, 1997, pp. 26-27), this study will contribute to the body of knowledge about policy making processes in relation to the reform and restructure of public education in Western Australia and Australia. As noted earlier, the most recent wave of educational reform and restructure has been occurring in Western Australian since the mid-1980s. Given the major changes in philosophy and structures in the way that education services are delivered to local communities, there is a surprising lack of critical policy research and analysis available in the public domain. As a consequence, there is no alternative commentary or critique to enable local communities to question and challenge

the nature, purpose and processes as well as effects of policy changes. Most of the literature on educational reform in Western Australia is couched in the discourse of quality learning, professional development, professional leadership and the teacher's role in education policy reform (Dimmock, 1999; Elliot, 1992; Wildy & Wallace, 1995). It is through *LAEP* that the most recent wave of structural change to Western Australia's public education system has occurred. However, apart from informal discussions across communities involved in *LAEP*, various representations of *LAEP* in the media and research into the role of students' in *LAEP* (Oerlemans, 2001; Oerlemans & Vidovich, 2003), there has been no comprehensive assessment or empirical research that specifically addresses the policy process itself. In addressing this gap in the literature, the study will specifically focus on the localised effects of *LAEP* in Bunbury, Western Australia.

Second, while a number of studies document the gap between the rhetoric of government policy and the way it is [re]constructed at the local level (Bowe et al., 1992; Boyd, 1984; Foster, 1990; Swanson, 1989), few studies attempt to understand the processes of policy reconstruction in the area of community development and participation in education decision-making. This study will contribute to knowledge about community participation in educational policy making by giving voice to the community representatives who, at various times, identified themselves as marginalised and silenced during the *LAEP* process. This study provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on the experience through a formal research process that will be publicly available to EDWA and other stakeholders.

Third, there is a paucity of policy analysis frameworks that account for multiple levels and multiple perspectives (Dalton et al., 1996; Gale, 1994; Haimes, 1993; Ham & Hill, 1993; Taylor, 1997). As Rhoten (2000, p. 597) explains, "despite their callings, few analysts have attempted to develop and apply such a framework for studying education policy." Chalip (1996) argues that, despite policy analysts identifying the value of undertaking critical policy analysis, there are very few critical policy analysis frameworks that can be directly applied to examining the policy process (p. 312). In reviewing the literature on education reform, Levin (2001a) concludes that a great deal of research lacks a clearly articulated theoretically informed policy analysis framework. He also contends that, while the policy cycle approach developed by Bowe et al. (1992) and extended by Ball (1993, 1994a), is frequently cited by educational commentators, there

are relatively few efforts (Levin, 2001a), with the exception of Vidovich (2007), to extend the framework. The CPTF developed in this study aims to address this shortcoming in the education policy analysis literature. It also has the potential to offer a guide to other researchers interested in using a critical multi-framed approach to undertake policy analysis.

Finally, Prunty (1984, 1985) emphasises the emancipatory potential of policy and the importance of developing knowledge about effective political action and policy analysis. This study will endeavour to provide new knowledge about policy advocacy and community empowerment by connecting policy theory and practice with political action.

## **STRUCTURE OF THESIS**

This thesis comprises nine chapters. Chapter One provided the overall context for the study by locating the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) within the broader education restructuring trend that has been occurring at a global and international level, and within Western Australia, since the early-1980s. The aim and research questions for the study were identified, as well as a brief introduction to the socially critical theoretical underpinnings of the research. I was open about my interests and the value base I bring to the research and located myself as an emerging critical researcher. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the significance of the study, particularly its potential to contribute to the field of critical policy analysis.

Chapter Two presents the CPTF that I have developed to understand the enactment of *LAEP*. This framework is informed by critical social theory and offers explanations of the policy process at three interrelated and interactive levels. At the macro structural level, the broad environmental context and factors (demographic/geographic, political, socio-economic, ideological, cultural and globalisation) which shape policy are identified. This level also addresses the role of the state in shaping policy and policy making environments. The middle-range institutional level addresses how and why policy issues are constructed and framed to convey particular meanings and understandings of social issues throughout the policy processes. The micro level addresses the lived experiences of actors in the policy process and how various interests influence how and why policy choices are made.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology, methods, data collection and data analysis process, limitations and ethical issues that inform my study of *LAEP*. The critical ethnographic methodology that I use to investigate the research question for this study is drawn from the field of qualitative research/enquiry and incorporates both critical modernist and poststructural/postmodern theoretical perspectives. The data collection used to generate findings, at the macro, middle-range and micro levels of the CPTF is through 25 in-depth interviews, as well as primary and secondary documents. L. Harvey's (1990, p. 20) "dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive" data analysis process was used to analyse all data sources for this study. The trustworthiness of the research process and findings is demonstrated through the triangulation of the data sources both within and between the three levels of the CPTF and the application of Lather's (1986a) reformulations of construct validity, face validity and catalytic validity as they apply to critical social research and in particular, *LAEP*. Because critical ethnography is postpositivist, qualitative and socially critical, I integrate a critically reflexive view of the political nature of fieldwork, knowledge construction and participant representation.

Chapter Four applies a macro policy analysis perspective to identify the broad environmental factors, influences and processes at the global and nation-state levels which have facilitated education restructuring and the policy manoeuvre of devolution and community participation across western nations over the past two decades. I present the idea of devolution and community participation as "travelling" policies (Dehli, 2004, p. 46) and argue that, while pre-globalisation accounts of education policy borrowing occur between nations, any analysis of education policy convergence needs to be located within the context of the global economic crisis of the 1970s, increasing economic and political globalisation processes, the influence of transnational capital and transnational organisations, the emergence of neo-liberal ideology and the construction of a crisis of the Fordist Keynesian welfare state. I also argue, that combined, these factors presented similar pressures confronting nation-states to reconfigure their role with regard to the purpose and provision of public education. To avoid a totalising view of the global spread of neo-liberal education policies across western nations, I argue for a form of "vernacular globalization" (Lingard, 2000b, pp. 80-81) which recognises that tensions exist between globalisation and localisation and the ways in which nation-states respond to global education restructuring discourses.

Chapter Five applies a “policy genealogy” (Gale, 2001, pp. 384-390) approach to examine how successive Western Australian governments have responded to “travelling” policies (Dehli, 2004, p. 46) and global pressures to restructure public education. The major education policy documents and reviews during the period 1975-1998, which aimed to reform and restructure the Western Australian public education system, are deconstructed to illuminate the socio-political, economic and ideological contexts shaping public policy reform initiatives in Western Australia. Rizvi’s (1994) social democratic, corporate managerialist and market/liberal models of devolution and community participation are drawn on to explain how these discourses are articulated in the formation and enactment of the education policy documents produced by successive Western Australian governments. This approach opens possibilities for historically locating why and how the *LAEP* policy was introduced, traces whether there is continuity/discontinuity in the dominant discourses about devolution and community participation, and in what form these manifest in the *LAEP* policy text. The effects of previous education policies in local educational sites also offer insights on which I draw to help me understand both the conflicting interpretations of the *LAEP* policy text and the participants’ stories about the contestation and resistance surrounding the enactment of *LAEP* in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight which present the ethnographic findings for the study.

Chapter Six addresses how devolution and community participation are constructed as official policy discourses in *LAEP* and how this policy manoeuvre is interpreted and enacted within the EDWA bureaucracy and at the local level in Bunbury. The issues I address include, how participation is formally integrated in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), how participants experienced their participation in *LAEP*, how and why local people became involved in *LAEP*, how community representativeness is constructed, and the expectations the participants held about the nature of their participation. The issue of community representativeness in *LAEP* is approached from the perspective that, in participatory planning processes, the groups or individuals who speak for *others* emerge from the interaction of discursive and structural factors operating in a particular “political field” as well as the social agency of individuals (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 379-465). The contradictions, tensions and paradoxes which emerge from the political rhetoric facilitating participation in *LAEP* and participants’ lived experiences of their

participation in *LAEP* are explored. The constraints on effective participation in *LAEP* are also discussed.

Chapter Seven explores the process of active interpretation and meaning-making of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) in practice in relation to the politics and effects of social problem construction, representation and legitimation by stakeholders at different sites of the policy process. The way in which the Western Australian Coalition Government framed and justified the problems with public education in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and accompanying policy texts is explored. The resonance of the discourses within which the problems with the Western Australian public education system are constructed and global and national education restructuring discourses are discussed. Participants' stories about how the nature of the problems with the local senior high schools were defined, where the blame for the problems with the local schools was located and the EDWA administrators' proposed solutions for the problems with the local schools are explored. How the local community and their *LAEP* representatives deconstructed, contested and reframed the discourses circulated by State policy elites about the problems with the local high schools in Bunbury is also presented.

Chapter Eight explores the agenda-building activities of stakeholder groups across different levels of the policy trajectory who promoted competing discourses and agendas for education reform throughout the enactment of *LAEP*. Ten focusing events are described and analysed to illuminate the tactics and political manoeuvres drawn on by community representatives to contest and resist the EDWA policy elites' neo-liberal education restructuring solutions to the problems with the local schools in Bunbury. The analytic emphasis is on the micro-political processes drawn on by participants to exercise their social agency within an "invited" policy space (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) to redefine *LAEP* as a problem on the public, media and political agendas. The policy settlement produced from the *LAEP* enactment process is identified and analysed in relation to the importance of relating global and national policy contexts to the micro practices within local communities.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis and presents the key findings and conclusions from the study and discusses a number of the emerging theoretical issues. I argue that while the CPTF assists us to describe and analyse the factors influencing policy, it is also necessary to engage with policy to develop ideas and ways to actively influence its production and

enactment. To this end, I synthesise some key ideas, insights and lessons emerging from the research to develop a critically engaged policy perspective which is both critical and political in the areas of policy, research and practice.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **A CRITICAL POLICY TRAJECTORY FRAMEWORK**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I present the CPTF that I apply to investigate the enactment of *LAEP*. My aim in developing a CPTF is not to create an overarching framework or “grand theory” (Vidovich, 2001, p. 13) but to develop a useful heuristic model that will assist me to deconstruct the enactment of *LAEP*. The value of a policy analysis framework is its potential for identifying trends and patterns in policy processes as well as ordering the “messiness and complexity” which tend to characterise policy processes (Ball, 1990, p. 9). Along with policy analysts such as Fulcher (1989), I contend that researchers interested in policy development need to build on and adapt models to fit the policy analysis situation. Like Henry (1993), my intention is to synthesise the best of modernist/structural and postmodern/poststructural analyses in a way that best illuminates *LAEP*. To this end, I acknowledge and move beyond the well rehearsed debates in the critical education policy and policy sociology literature over issues such as, how to define policy (Ball, 1994a; Codd, 1988; Prunty, 1984, 1985; Taylor et al., 1997), and whether a state control (Dale, 1989; Ozga, 1990) or policy cycle (Ball, 1993, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992) approach most accurately reflects education policy processes to draw on what I regard as the most useful aspects from these fields.

The first section of this chapter discusses how critical social theory and in particular critical modernist and poststructuralist theorising informs my understanding of policy and policy analysis processes. In the second section, I identify some of the key assumptions from the critical policy analysis and policy sociology literature that underpin the CPTF. Finally, I detail the theoretical ideas and concepts which inform the macro, middle-range and micro levels which comprise the CPTF I apply to *LAEP*.

#### **CRITICAL POLICY ANALYSIS**

As previously mentioned, this study is located in the tradition of critical policy analysis, which as Taylor et al. (1997, p. 20) says, “represents a synthesising, interdisciplinary field of study” inspired by critical social theory. Critical social theory encompasses a wide



variety of ideological positions, or, as Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 109) suggest, “a blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms [to positivism].” Recent reconceptualisations of critical social theory incorporate critical modernist or neo-Marxist perspectives as well as feminism, postmodernism and poststructuralism (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). By critical social theory or “socially critical” perspectives (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 113), I refer to approaches which have a pronounced interest in “disputing” and deconstructing “social realities” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000, p. 110) as well as seeking to uncover subtleties of oppressive practices so that they can be challenged and potentially changed (Carspecken, 1996; Crotty, 1998). As Marshall (1997) explains, critical social theory addresses:

... issues of social justice and problematizes the institutions and structures of society and education that operate powerfully to maintain unequal and unjust social and political relations. It focuses on the methods and meanings of domination, including the historical evolution of ideologies that buttress power to reveal the politicization of knowledge and language. (p. 17)

In a similar vein, Starr (1992) argues that policy analysis that is informed by critical social theory is primarily concerned with:

Overcome[ing] the criticisms raised against traditional approaches because it is overtly political, because it is emancipatory in intent and because it attempts to expose favoured values and social arrangements and the sources of power and control underpinning them. A critical policy analysis uncovers the hegemonic technologies which are brought into play which restrain human consciousness and emancipation. (p. 4)

While Starr’s (1992) approach to policy analysis is relevant to this study, it is important to note that, like critical social theory, the field of critical policy analysis is also characterised by eclectic theoretical perspectives. For example, Prunty (1984) reflects a modernist neo-Marxist perspective that emphasises uncovering dominant interests and values and the sources of domination and repression in the policy process as well as sources of structural inequality. The work of Ball (1990, 1993, 1994a) and Bowe et al. (1992) draws on poststructural/postmodern ideas and directs attention to micro-political processes and the role of language in mediating the relationship between discourse and power/knowledge in the policy process. It is these ideas and the emphasis on understanding policy processes beyond the level of superficial appearances that motivate my interest in critical social theory and critical policy analysis as the theoretical lens

through which to investigate and deconstruct commonsense understandings associated with education policy processes such as *LAEP*.

### **Defining Policy: A Critical View**

When undertaking policy analysis, Ball (1990, 1993) reminds us that policy analysis frameworks are guided by meanings applied to policy which, in turn, influence how the research is approached, the parameters of the research task, and the way research results are interpreted. Prunty (1984, p. 9) argues that the theoretical paradigms that either implicitly or explicitly inform understandings of policy and policy analysis frameworks need to be made explicit because “they permit[s] one to see the world by providing an interpretive framework, but they also restrict what one is able to see by focusing on only one part of the whole.” Drawing on Taylor et al. (1997, p. 24), I view policy as a political process of contestation and “compromise which is struggled over at all stages by competing interests.” My understanding of policy also draws on Prunty (1985, p. 135) who describes policy as “the authoritative allocation and legitimation of values,” an approach that recognises the value-laden nature of policy and that issues of power and control are central in the policy process. Ball’s (1993, 1994a) ideas about policy are also useful because he unsettles fixed definitions by questioning *unproblematic* explanations and meanings of policy. He prefers an approach that emphasises notions of contested and diverse meanings and the embeddedness of truth claims in power relations.

Unlike traditional views of policy, Ball (1994a) and Taylor et al. (1997) prefer to understand policy as a process that is dynamic and ongoing rather than as a final product. This conceptualisation goes some way toward explaining why it is difficult to provide a simple, precise definition of policy. For Ball (1994a, p. 15), policy comprises both “text” and “discourse.” As text, policies are always evolving, and their production usually involves contestation, negotiation and compromise. The purpose of policy, how it is understood and acted upon by actors across different sites of the policy process, as well as what values and agendas are advocated or repressed all contribute to defining and analysing policy (Ball, 1994a). This poststructural approach to policy analysis regards policy texts as working documents that are open to multiple interpretations through their “readerly” and “writerly” characteristics (Bowe et al., 1992, p. 12). The “readerly” nature of policy texts presents possibilities for policy change and spaces for resistance and political manoeuvring (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12). As discourse,

policies also exercise power through the “production of truth.” That is, they construct the actors, legitimate some voices and silence others, and determine the possibilities for “thought and action” through “regimes of truth” which privilege dominant discourses (Ball, 1994a, pp. 21-22).

For this study, the way in which critical policy analysts such as Prunty (1984, 1985), Ball (1990, 1993, 1994a) and Taylor et al. (1997) conceptualise policy is useful because they focus on the political nature of the policy process and emphasise the role of values and the inherent power relations. Furthermore, by constructing the policy process as fluid, where multiple interpretations of policies emerge, provides a useful approach for locating, deconstructing and understanding the conflictual and competing interpretations of *LAEP* throughout the various contexts of the policy process.

## **TOWARD A CRITICAL POLICY TRAJECTORY FRAMEWORK**

Having located my study within the domain of critical policy analysis and discussed how policy is understood in this study, I now outline some of the key assumptions from both the critical policy analysis approaches of the 1980s and the education policy sociology literature of the 1990s that underpin the development of the CPTF. The following assumptions are core to this study because they shaped my understanding of the formulation and enactment of *LAEP* and the issues that the CPTF needed to address for this study.

- Critical policy analysis recognises the role of values, socio-political and economic ideologies, social interests, political power and conflict in shaping policy processes (Cocklin, 1992; Dalton et al., 1996; Prunty, 1984).
- Policies as “text” contain both “readerly” and “writerly” moments that provide possibilities for change and resistance by identifying the tensions, conflicts, inequalities and internal contradictions of policies (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12).
- Policy making is seen as an “arena of struggle over meaning” (Taylor, 1997, p. 26) or the “politics of discourse” (Yeatman, 1990, p. 155). Hence, the influence of ideology in the way that language is used as an instrument of social power is made explicit (Bosetti, 1989; Codd, 1988; Gale, 1994; Taylor, 1997).
- As discourse, policies exercise power through the production of truth by legitimating some voices and silencing others (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994a). Power

relations are immersed in discourses. A central question is whose interests, values and ideologies are served, validated and protected in the policy process (Ball, 1993, 1994a; Bosetti, 1989; Prunty, 1984, 1985; Taylor et al., 1997).

- Policy making is located within its broad economic, social, cultural and historical contexts. It addresses how the structuring of power shapes the policy process and thus systematically favours the social, political, or economic interests of certain groups and reinforces patterns of inequality and relations of domination (Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Prunty, 1984, 1985).
- Critical policy analysis recognises the multi-layered nature of the policy development process, of which power and ideology are connecting themes (Grimley, 1986; Prunty, 1984, 1985; R. Smith, 1993; Taylor, 1997). Explanations of policy processes are offered at a number of interrelated and interactive levels or contexts which constitute a policy trajectory approach.

### **A Policy Trajectory Approach: Levels and Contexts**

The necessity of recognising different levels, layers or contexts of the policy process is the subject of extensive discussion in the education policy analysis literature (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992; Gale, 1994; Henry, 1993; Lingard, 1993, 1996; Ozga, 1990, 2000b; Taylor, 1997; Vidovich, 2001). For example, Ozga (1990, p. 359) in her discussion of approaches to policy analysis concludes that it is important to “bring together structural, macro-level of analysis ... and micro level investigation.” The policy trajectory approach for this study is derived from the work of Bowe et al. (1992) and Ball (1993, 1994a, 1997) and presents an alternative to top-down single-level policy processes by conceptualising the policy process as multi-layered with policy evolving and being constructed and [re]constructed across different levels or contexts. This approach also recognises that struggles over the intentions and meanings of policy occur in a variety of interrelated contexts (Ball, 1993, 1997; Bowe et al., 1992). The value of a policy trajectory approach for the *LAEP* is that it enables me to describe and analyse the formation and enactment of education policy in a non-linear way. Furthermore as Ball (1993, p. 16) says, a trajectory approach to policy analysis urges us to “ask critical/theoretical questions, rather than simple problem-solving ones.” As Figure 1. (p. 28) illustrates, the CPTF I have developed for this study incorporates the following three interrelated levels or sites of the policy process into one conceptual framework.

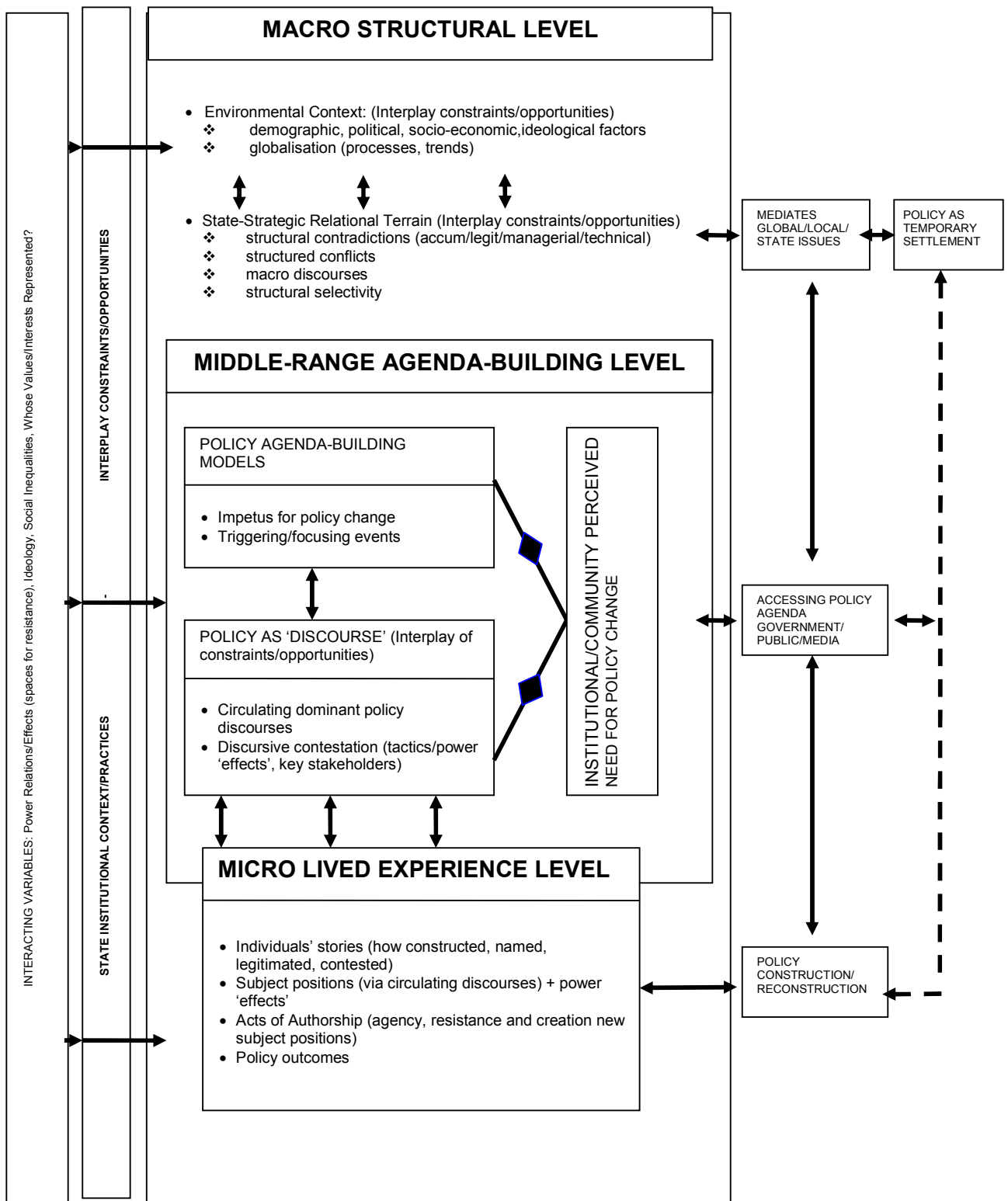
*The macro structural level* focuses on the broad policy making context. This level of analysis includes the broad environmental context and factors (demographic/geographic, socio-economic, ideological, cultural and global) in which policies are shaped. This level also addresses the nature and role of the state in shaping policies and policy making contexts. By incorporating global factors and processes as part of the broader environmental context, the framework addresses omissions in other policy approaches and extends policy generation and the contexts of influence beyond the nation-state (Ball, 1997, 2001; Lingard, 1996; Rhoten, 2000; Vidovich, 2001, 2007).

*The middle-range institutional level* addresses the “messy realities” (Ball, 1990, p. 9) of policy enactment including its reception as well as the resistance, negotiation and contradiction at the middle-range level of state bureaucracies. The focus at this level also includes how and why policy issues are constructed and framed to convey particular meanings and understandings of social issues throughout the policy process. The role of discourse in agenda-building (Bacchi, 1999, 2000; Taylor, 1997) is incorporated to explore how particular policy issues are constructed and framed and which issues are elevated and given legitimate status for consideration on the public, media and government agendas.

*The micro level* addresses the equally “messy realities” (Ball, 1990, p. 9) at the micro level of the local community context of policy practice (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992; Maguire & Ball, 1994; Vidovich, 2001, 2007). This includes illuminating the lived experiences of participants in the policy process and how their experiences are constructed, named, contested and legitimated (Giroux, 1985, 1997). How subject positions are constructed via discourse, the power effects in terms of relations of domination, and participants’ agency and resistance as a way of engaging in policy construction and reconstruction, are central issues. At this level attention is also directed toward how policy choices are made and the implications in terms of power relations throughout the process.

In keeping with the notion of a policy trajectory approach, Figure 1. (p. 28) illustrates that policy development is not linear but a highly interactive and dynamic process with each level shaping the other levels. A key feature of this framework is that it combines both structural and interactive levels of analysis. This feature enables links to be established between policy generated at the macro (global, nation-state) level and how it impacts at

the middle-range (institutional level of agenda-building) and micro (personal lived and group experience) levels. Connections are made between structural and situational factors in a way that recognises the role of actors in the policy process and how they are both enabled and constrained (Lingard, 1993). This approach to policy analysis also suggests that while structural foundations set the stage for policy making it is through agenda-building processes of interest groups and actors exercising effective social agency that policy [re]construction occurs at the local level.



**Figure 1.: A Critical Policy Trajectory Framework**

Having provided an overview of the assumptions and identified the different levels which comprise the CPTF for this study, I now discuss in greater detail the key concepts and ideas that inform each level of the framework. While the CPTF used in this study reflects the trend toward theoretical eclecticism in policy analysis (Ball, 1994a; Gewirtz & Ozga, 1994; Ozga, 2000b; Taylor, 1997; Vidovich, 2001, 2007), I also note Ball's (1994a, p. 2) warning that at times theories can "clash and grate against one another." Following Grace (1998), I incorporate reflexive processes into the research design (see Chapter Three) so that the limitations, inconsistencies and omissions of the CPTF when applied to *LAEP* are made visible.

## **THE MACRO STRUCTURAL LEVEL OF THE FRAMEWORK**

This structural level of analysis identifies the broad policy making context in which claims about policy issues emerge and policy options are developed. As Figure 1. (p. 28) illustrates the broad policy making context contains two major components:

- the broad environmental context in which policies such as *LAEP* are shaped. Here globalisation features as a key factor; and
- the nature, power and role of the nation-state and education bureaucracy in policy making processes.

### **Environmental Context**

Drawing on the work of Prunty (1984, p. 29), it is important to understand and reveal how the broad environmental context (demographic/geographic, political, socio-economic and ideological) shapes the policy process in ways that are both enabling and constraining. While environmental factors are not regarded as causal determinants, they form part of the immediate and historical context in which policy issues emerge and the nature of the contexts in which policy making occurs (Graycar & Jamrozik, 1989; Prunty, 1984, 1985; Simeon, 1976). For example, since the 1980s, countries such as Australia, Britain, the United States of America (O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998), and New Zealand (Olssen, Codd, & O'Neill, 2004) have identified the growing number of students at risk of failing school and of not making a successful transition into the labour force. At the local, national and international level, it is estimated that at least 20 per cent of students continue to be alienated from education and are at risk of long-term unemployment and welfare dependency into adulthood. Relative to other Organisation



for Economic and Cultural Development (hereafter OECD) countries, Australia is ranked 17<sup>th</sup> (out of 28) in upper secondary school education completion rates. Whilst completion rates were 90 percent in the early-1990s, in 2000 they had declined to 71.6 percent (Down, 2002, p. 1 citing Australian Bureau of Statistics). The cost of people not completing schooling in Australia is approximately \$2.6 billion per year (King, 1999, p. 20). As discussed in Chapter Four, it is these kinds of social indicators and demographic data that are used to argue the position of mediocre performance and to manufacture a crisis in public education (Smyth, 2001). Solutions are then promoted that argue the need to restructure public education systems so that schools are more cost effective and efficient, and are capable of producing a more flexible, educated and skilled workforce that is competitive in the global economy. The value of taking into account the broad environmental factors is that it not only addresses the range of factors contributing to the emergence of *LAEP*, but it also recognises how they shape the education restructuring options promoted by the state at the local level.

### **Globalisation**

Globalisation processes are a key component of the environmental context and are incorporated to reflect contemporary approaches to education policy making that attribute globalisation with increasing significance in shaping the nature of education reform policies of nation-states (Lingard, 1993, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997). Furthermore, the incorporation of global factors and processes as a context of influence on education reform and policy making also recognises that there is a context of influence extending beyond the nation-state (L. Angus, 2004; Lingard, 1993, 1996; Rhoten, 2000; Taylor et al., 1997; Vidovich, 2001, 2007). Central issues relate to how globalisation processes (particularly economic globalisation) have an impact on the nature and content of policy choices that nation-states make (L. Angus, 2004; Ball, 1998a; Blackmore, 1997; Henry, Lingard, Rizvi, & Taylor, 2001).

Although the definition of globalisation is contested, as Vidovich (2001, p. 15 referring to R. Robertson) suggests, “it generally refers to the interconnectedness of the world (economic, cultural, social and technological dimensions), through compression of time and space.” Despite the inclusion of cultural, social and political dimensions in definitions of globalisation, economic globalisation is regarded as most prominent (Barns, Dudley, Harris, & Petersen, 1999; Currie, 2003; Lingard, 1993; Rizvi & Lingard,

2000; Taylor et al., 1997; Torres, 2002; Waters, 1995). The characteristics of economic globalisation include the global spread of capitalism, increasingly open economic competition, the emerging dominance of multinational corporations, the decentralisation of financial markets and the mobility of capital, and the deregulation of labour. Australia is now increasingly being incorporated into a global economy (Dudley, 1998; Taylor et al., 1997). This move toward a global economy is generally understood in relation to the changing situation of the world in relation to capitalism (Aronowitz, 1990a, 1990b; Giddens, 1990; D. Harvey, 1989; Lash & Urry, 1987) and is given many names including “flexible accumulation” (D. Harvey, 1989 p. 147), “disorganized capitalism” (Lash & Urry, 1987, pp. 5-6) or generally viewed as a shift to a global economy (Hinkson, 1993). Economic globalisation is also associated with the philosophy of neo-liberalism and the embracing of market-based economies (Lingard, 1993, 1996; Rizvi, 2000; Taylor et al., 1997). The focus on economic interrelations suggests close alliances between globalisation and the New Right ideology, which as Vidovich (1998, p. 50) says “is referred to as economic rationalism or neoliberalism.” The relationship between globalisation and education reform raises issues about the impact that globalisation has made on the very formation and functioning of nation-states (L. Angus, 2004; Ball, 2001; Blackmore, 2000; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Dale, 1999b; Lingard & Rizvi, 1998). Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton (1999, pp. 2-9) identify the following three approaches that relate to the impact of globalisation on the role and nature of the nation-state:

The *hyperglobalists* argue that we have entered a global age involving the dominance of capitalism and the beginning of distinctively different forms of global culture, governance and of civil society. According to this view, the nature and functions of the nation-state are threatened and in demise (Fukuyama, 1992; Ohmae, 1995; Strange, 1996; Waters, 1995).

The *sceptics* hold that globalisation as a dominant process is exaggerated. They argue that nation-states are taking on a far more significant role in managing the increasing crisis tendencies of capitalism (Green, 1997; Hirst & Thompson, 1996; L. Weiss, 1998). While this perspective recognises that some national education systems may have become more porous and even similar in some important ways, it does not mean that national education systems will no longer continue or that their control will exist beyond nation-states. Green (1997, p. 171), for example, rejects the notion of any meaningful globalisation of

education systems and argues that there has been only “partial internationalization” of education.

The *transformatives* reflect my own thinking about globalisation and are exemplified in the work of Ball (1998a), Blackmore (1999), Brown and Lauder (1996) Henry, Lingard, Rizvi and Taylor (1999), P. Jones (1998), Lingard (1993, 1996), Lingard and Rizvi (1998), and Marginson (1999). Like hyperglobalists, the transformatives contend that there are unprecedented levels of interconnectedness among nation-states and peoples (Giddens, 1990). Transformationalists, however, doubt the advent of a global age of economic, political and cultural integration suggesting instead that globalisation processes are “discursively constituted as a regime of truth, inevitable, imperative, desirable” (Dudley, 1998, p. 39). They argue that globalisation processes and effects are not homogeneous, but are historically located, complex, and may be replete with contradictions (Henry et al., 1999; Lingard, 1993, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997). While Lingard and Rizvi (1998) emphasise the importance of political structures, such as the nation-state, in the way in which the global economy operates, they also maintain that political globalisation has seen the:

... changing constitution of the nation state, changes to the structures and *modus operandi* of the administrative structures of the state, and varying educational policy settlements by different governments within the same nation and at different points in time. (p. 64)

What this means, according to Lingard, (1993, 1996) is that the reconfigured state now mediates between the different levels (i.e. local and global sites) at which policy is formulated and produced. Other education policy commentators argue that instead of a rolling back of the state which is often characteristic of a neo-liberal market ideology (Ball, 2001; Burchell, 1994; Dale, 1999a; Ozga, 2000a), the reconfigured state has taken on a “competitive” form (Yeatman, 1993, p. 3) which retains a significant role in developing policy. Marginson (1999) also reminds us that while the political structures of the nation-state have been reconfigured it continues to have primary responsibility for a range of policy issues and the allocation of associated values.

The relationship between globalisation and education reform also raises issues concerning how global education trends translate at a practice level in nation-states, particularly given the changing role and administrative functioning of the state (L. Angus, 2004; Ball, 2001; Blackmore, 2000; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Dale, 1999a; Lingard &

Rizvi, 1998). As elaborated on in Chapter Four, some writers argue that the global climate for education restructuring in developed and developing countries emanates from international organisations, such as the OECD, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (hereafter IMF) (Ball, 2001; P. Jones, 1997, 1998; Prawda, 1993; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b; Taylor et al., 1997; K. Watson, 2000). These organisations form part of a global policy forum, and as Ball (2001, p. xxxix) concludes, transnational organisations, such as the OECD are implicated in facilitating the “convergence of education and social welfare policies between countries which have very different political and social welfare histories.” Ball (1998a) also makes the point that while a number of principles or a theoretical model informing education policy can be identified, for example neo-liberalism, new institutional economics, and choice theory, these are seldom replicated in policy texts or practice in direct or “pristine” ways.

So, while it would appear that state educational policies have become increasingly uniform since the beginning of the 1980s, the extent to which they have been implemented and the outcome of their implementation vary considerably. As Lingard and Rizvi (1998, pp. 69-70) explain, the manner in which nation-states mediate and “relativise” their policy options within the context of globalisation is directly related to a country’s “history, culture, politics, political structures” as well as the ideology and practices of the particular government currently in power. They further add that the “extent of this mediation is at times an indication of whether or not the ideological or empirical effects of globalisation are having a greater or lesser impact on national policy production in education” (Lingard & Rizvi, 1998, pp. 69-70). Key issues for this study relate to how globalisation processes impact on state education policy making, the nature and content of policy choices and how these influences are mediated by the state and at the local community level.

### **Key Ideas from Macro Level Environmental Context**

By way of summary, the environmental context of the policy trajectory framework, as illustrated in Figure 1. (p. 28) help us to better understand:

- the environmental factors (demographic/geographic, political, socio-economic and ideological) which shape and constrain policy processes and policy options; and

- globalisation as part of the broad environmental context has increasingly come to shape the nature of policy choices by nation-states.

With this understanding, the environmental context can assist in illuminating the following questions:

- What environmental factors (demographic/geographic, political, socio-economic, and ideological) influence the emergence of education reform as a policy issue globally, nationally and locally?
- What are the historical and contemporary aspects of these environmental factors that constrain and shape the policy process?
- What global influences and trends are evident in shaping the nature and processes of education reform?
- How are global processes taken into account in policy production by the nation-state?
- How are the ideological discourses framing education policy at a national level also compatible with global discourses?
- What policy structures are operating beyond nation-states which frame education policies? (Lingard, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997; Vidovich, 2001, 2007).

### **The Nature and Role of the Nation-State**

At this level of the trajectory framework, the state presents as an important context and site of influence in the policy process in capitalist, quasi-market, liberal democracies such as Australia (Ham & Hill, 1993; C. Offe, 1975, 1984a; Porter, Knight, & Lingard, 1993; Taylor et al., 1997). Modern liberal democratic states such as Australia may be characterised as consisting of a “political, judicial and administrative institutions which have complex relationships with the government of the day” (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 29). Therefore, the state, configured as a set of institutions, has a legitimate and critical role in developing public policy and retains the responsibility for the provision of public education. While the state form is reflected in terms of its institutional ensemble, it is not as Taylor et al. (1997, p. 29) suggest a “unitary entity” to which “purposeful action” can be credited, nor is it totally directed by external powerful organisations such as transnational corporations. Rather, the state as Taylor et al. (1997, p. 29) say can also be conceptualised “as a set of processes which collectively have particular outcomes.”

Following Lingard (1993, 1996), I want to move beyond neo-Marxist state-control (Dale, 1989; Ozga, 1990) and poststructural policy cycle (Ball, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992) accounts as competing explanations of the role of the state in the policy process. Rather, I want to draw on aspects of both perspectives in a way that represent the state as a historical, multi-layered, and relational actor that is at the centre of policy production (Ball, 1994a; Gale, 1994; Henry, 1993; Lingard, 1993, 1996; Ozga, 2000a; Taylor et al., 1997; Torres, 1999; Vidovich, 2001). The approach taken here is that the state can develop dominant discourses and practices to produce centrally determined policies. In the case of *LAEP*, a dominant discourse is that senior campuses and middle schools will deliver more efficient and effective educational outcomes. However, as this study demonstrates, the policy process for achieving these outcomes is far from straightforward.

Of particular interest to this study are state theories that retain a sense of structure while at the same time accommodating poststructural notions of complexity, “heterogeneity, contradiction and contestation” (Vidovich, 2001, p. 8). To this end, I draw upon a range of perspectives, including:

- neo-Marxist state control approaches (Dale, 1989; C. Offe, 1975, 1984a, 1984b);
- the state as a reconfigured postmodern state that has been facilitated by globalisation and global economic pressures (Ball, 1994a; Lingard, 1993, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997); and
- the state as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360).

### **Neo-Marxist State-Control Approaches**

A key question from neo-Marxist state-control perspectives (Dale, 1989, 1999a; C. Offe, 1975, 1984a) relates to why the state pursues particular policies and courses of action. This question is addressed by understanding the role of the state in relation to “serving the needs of capitalism” as a system and the policy making capacity of the capitalist state (S. Bell & Head, 1994, p. 6). This perspective provides an account of the state in capitalist societies as a set of institutions that has to balance irresolvable tensions. As Taylor et al. (1997, p. 6) argue, state structures are a part of the political organisation of the state and include “federal or unitary forms of government” and the “administrative structure of particular departments.” To a large extent, this approach is essentially about the way state structures mediate policy processes (Dale, 1989, 1999a; C. Offe, 1975, 1984a).

In managing these tensions the state faces inherently irreconcilable contradictions. On the one hand, it must ensure that the economy continues to function in a satisfactory fashion so that state revenues can be generated to perpetuate capitalism, and, on the other hand, it must respond to political and democratic demands upon it for policy coverage to provide at least a perception of fair play and social justice (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). To understand the role of the state in the policy process is to appreciate how policy making is shaped and constrained by the two contradictory functions of maintaining both the conditions of capital accumulation and legitimation (Dale, 1989, 1999a; Gough, 1979; Habermas, 1975; O'Connor, 1973; C. Offe, 1975, 1984b; Ozga, 1990). Accumulation functions of the state relate to policies that maintain conditions that are favourable for capital accumulation to occur. Legitimation functions are directed at maintaining political stability, social harmony, and social control (Dale, 1989; C. Offe, 1975, 1984b). From this perspective, education is part of the political and ideological apparatus necessary for the preservation and legitimation of the capitalist system. As C. Offe (1975, 1984a) suggests, the state can never solve these contradictory demands but simply come to settlements that seek to manage the tensions between the accumulation and legitimation functions of the state, which are inevitably in the interests of maintaining the capitalist system.

This approach also acknowledges the contradictions associated with the operation of state institutions in attempting to manage the demands of accumulation/legitimation. So, while the state is a form of centralised power, it also comprises sets of contradictory relations which lack unity. Notions of contradiction, contestation, legitimation, and the role of the state as a “crisis manager” are emphasised and also provide a context for understanding the role of the state in the policy development process. In managing the contradictory roles of legitimation and accumulation, the state is engaged in “cautious crisis management” (C. Offe, 1976, p. 415). By focusing on the contradictory roles of the state, insights are provided into why the state acts in certain ways in relation to the generation of policies, such as *LAEP*. It is important to recognise that structural contradictions may also include political, ideological and economic factors as the basis for policy change.

Because a neo-Marxist perspective attributes the state with autonomy from its economic base, a central proposition is that, while socio-economic relations limit state structures and activities, the state is also shaped by social and political processes. Policy processes and choices are understood as occurring within limits set by larger economic and social

forces. A neo-Marxist perspective also addresses the current and historical nature of structured conflicts, which underpin the emergence of particular policies. Social structure has an effect on the policy making process and outcomes. This perspective suggests that the state both shapes and is shaped by social struggle and power relations. Struggles over policy, therefore, take place on a terrain already structured by power and structured inequality. This approach also incorporates structured conflicts as sources of conflict, such as race, ethnicity, and gender (S. Bell & Head, 1994, pp. 53-54). Structural conflicts, therefore, provide an important focus in addressing whose interests are served when education restructuring policies such as *LAEP* are introduced.

The value of drawing on a neo-Marxist perspective of the role of the state is that it provides insights into the contradictory constraints operating on policy making processes in liberal democracies, such as Australia.

### **Key Ideas from Neo-Marxist State-Control Approaches**

By way of summary, neo-Marxist state control perspectives, as illustrated in Figure 1. (p. 28) help us to better understand:

- the structural contradictions (e.g. accumulation/legitimation) underpinning education policy change;
- the structural conflicts that are relevant to a particular historical period and policy domain as the basis for policy change and whose interests are served; and
- the nature of the structured conflicts as they relate to particular groups and the interests served by the need for policy change.

With this understanding, neo-Marxist state perspectives can assist in illuminating the following kinds of questions:

- What are the interests of the state in pursuing particular policy directions, such as educational restructuring?
- How does policy reflect the tension between accumulation and legitimation functions?
- How are these tensions played out at the local policy level?; and
- What structural contradictions create the conditions for policy change?

As a single explanatory framework, however, neo-Marxist perspectives are limited because they fail to acknowledge the changing context in which the nation-state now



performs its key roles particularly in light of globalisation processes. Furthermore, it does not disaggregate the notion of the state or address issues of the relationship between agency and structure (Lingard, 1993). These issues are addressed in the sections to follow.

### **A Reconfigured Postmodern State**

Lingard (1996) contends that while a neo-Marxist perspective continues to be relevant for understanding the role of the state in education policy making, in recent times the state has taken on a new form that he describes as a reconfigured “postmodernist state” (pp. 66-67). This approach suggests that, while the state retains its significance in the policy processes, it operates in a different way. This shift in thinking suggests that there are a number of significant factors influencing the relationship between contemporary educational reforms and the way nation-states operate. For example, the manner in which the state bureaucracies have been reformed needs to be understood in relation to the emergence of economic liberalism, increasing globalisation, the reconfiguration of the welfare-state and a shift towards a market-driven orientation (Barns et al., 1999; Lingard, 1996; Lingard & Blackmore, 1997; Marginson, 1993; Porter et al., 1993; Taylor et al., 1997; Vidovich, 2001). Taylor et al. (1997) also maintain that while globalisation of the economy and pressures to internationalise economies have led to the restructuring of the nation-state in the form of a reconfigured competitive state, there are implications not only in the way the state functions but also in terms of the capacity of individual states to develop their own specific policy options.

Since the 1980s the Australian Federal Government has increasingly sought to incorporate educational policy as a significant component of economic policy as a way of not only internationalising the Australian economy but also producing a highly skilled wage-earning workforce (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2002). The integration of a market perspective into the operation of the state means that governments are required to develop practices and infrastructure to facilitate this way of operating within state bureaucracies (Taylor et al., 1997). What this means is that under the umbrella of economic rationalism, marketisation of education and corporate managerialism, new approaches are required to organise and administer education systems and policy construction. For example, as a way of meeting the demands of an economic rationalist agenda education systems are required to bring about economic reforms and consequently social reforms. Also, the

reconfiguration of the state along corporate managerialist lines has produced new policy making structures and a shifting culture dominated by economic imperatives within state bureaucracies (Barns et al., 1999; Taylor et al., 1997; Thomson, 1998).

The impact of economic rationalist agendas and corporate managerialism has become increasingly dominant in education systems since the 1980s and early-1990s, and as Lingard et al. (2002, p. 13) point out, “these rearticulated managerialist and market versions of school-based management are thus linked to new state structures and new ideologies in a globalised, post-bureaucratic, post-Keynesian political and policy context.” This “managerialist transformation” has meant that the organisational arrangements and functions of educational bureaucracies have substantially changed (p. 13). Through adopting private sector management practices and structures into educational bureaucracies, this has resulted in a different relationship between a “policy and strategy producing centre and those sites which actually deliver the service” (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 10). Managerialism is characterised by a dominant form of central control while, at the same time, there is a shift toward devolving management of administration and operational issues to local sites. This perspective is particularly useful because it acknowledges the impact of bureaucracy and managerialism upon policy making, the significance of individual players and their varying ideological positions, and the significance of incoherence within the state itself.

The “centralising/decentralising tension” (Lingard, 1996, p. 73) or “centre-periphery relations” (Ball, 1990, p. 20) and the associated conflict and incoherence across state sites, which is characteristic of the reconfigured state, is not only relevant for understanding education policy changes over the past decade but also the formulation and enactment of *LAEP*. In this form the state mediates between the centre and local educational sites as well as the global and the local sites (Lingard, 1993, 1996; Lingard et al., 2002; Vidovich, 2001). A key role for the centre is to now formulate policy and prescribe outcomes. The local sites such as schools are granted autonomy to determine how to achieve policy outcomes prescribed by the Central Office (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 10). This policy and managerial shift has been characterised as “managed decentralisation” (Curtain cited in Taylor et al., 1997, p. 85), “decentralisation” and “recentralisation” (Lingard et al., 1995, p. 85) and “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135). Characteristic of these contradictory New Right approaches is that, while there is a shift in policy directions toward decentralisation and devolution, there is also increased

centralisation and government intervention and control at the same time (Goedegebuure, Kaiser, Maassen, & Weert, 1994).

The reorganisation of internal management structures within the state means that there are now additional structural problems facing the state that need to be taken into account when analysing policy processes. The reconfigured “postmodernist state” (Lingard, 1996, pp. 66-67) must deal with the structural problems of legitimation and accumulation as characterised by a neo-Marxist approach (Dale, 1989; C. Offe, 1975; Ozga, 1990) but another “field” of problems which Ball (1994a, p. 5) describes as “technical and managerial” emerges. The tensions arising from these contradictory structural state functions produce tensions within the policy process particularly through the micro-political struggles within the state.

### **Key Ideas from Reconfigured Postmodern State Perspective**

By way of summary, the key ideas from a reconfigured postmodern state as illustrated in Figure 1. (p. 28) help us to better understand:

- the impact of new managerialism on the internal structures of the state;
- the contradictory tensions facing the state as it tries to balance accumulation and legitimation functions as well as “technical and managerial” problems (Ball, 1994a, p. 5); and
- the role of state institutions in managing technical and managerial tensions by negotiating “centre-periphery relations” (Ball, 1990, p. 20) in the policy process or “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135).

With this understanding a reconfigured postmodern perspective of the role of the state can assist us in illuminating the following questions:

- How does the state manage technical and managerial issues in the *LAEP* process?
- How do centre/periphery issues manifest themselves in the policy process?; and
- How are the tensions dealt with by state institutions and interests at the local level?

The value of a reconfigured, poststructural view of the state is that it directs attention to the internal structures of the state, “centre-periphery relations” (Ball, 1990, p. 20) in the policy process, the potential for conflict, incoherence across state sites and diversity in the roles played by bureaucrats within the policy process. Lingard (1993, 1996) has,

however, called for an understanding of the state that addresses issues of structure and agency and disaggregates the notion of the state or the interior of the state as a way of understanding policy processes. These ideas, according to Lingard (1993) and Taylor et al. (1997), are addressed in Jessop's (1990, p. 360) notion of the state as a "strategic-relational" terrain.

### **Strategic-Relational Approach**

The strategic-relational view of the state suggests that while not the only activity of the state, the development of state policies represents central state projects and plays a key role in the formulation of state discourses and the constitution of the state itself (Jessop, 1990). This perspective recognises structural and social forms of the state in relation to the historically variable and contradictory relationships that exist between state structures, political actors and societal forces in a way that potentially enables the interior of the state to be "disaggregated" (Lingard, 1993, p. 42). The state is characterised as a "complex institutional ensemble" with powers that are "always conditional and relational" (Jessop, 1990, pp. 366-367). Thus, the state is understood as the institutions that constitute a state apparatus in a material or structural sense and as a strategic-relational terrain in its social form that is characterised by discursive contestation. Rather than seeing the state as unified and self-contained, this perspective begins to analytically incorporate the state's uncertain and porous boundaries where state institutions are continually reforming as a result of multiple influences (Jessop, 1990, p. 341). From this perspective, Jessop (1990) attempts to integrate structuralist and post-structuralist elements by developing an approach that combines structure and agency (i.e. state structures and political social actors). The strength of Jessop's (1990) approach to the state is that it locates the contradictions and dilemmas of the state at the heart of analysis.

### ***The state as a social relation***

A strategic-relational view of the state tends to focus less on state structures and more on how it comes to be a concrete societal force. Drawing on Poulantzas, Jessop (1990, p. 149) notes that "the state is a social relation" (or set of social relations). In this sense the state is understood in relation to its actions and actors. As Jessop (1990, p. 367) explains, "it is not the state which acts: it is always specific sets of politicians and state officials located in specific parts of the state system." Thus the state as a social relation does not

have a consciousness and purpose(s) of its own, despite at times having a “state logic” that differs from other social sites. As Watts (1993/1994, p. 107) contends, “grasping the idea, and the practices, of the state means making sense of how people who work in and for the state themselves make sense of the world, and what the effects of this are.” The point made by Watts (1993/1994) suggests that there are potentially different ideological positions (and similarities) between people working within the state and how this differentiation creates structures. The state is also discursively constructed by groups external to it. In particular, the interaction is, not only between state and society but also between individuals and groups of individuals occupying different locations in relation to the state.

### ***Strategic-relational terrain: Constraint and opportunity***

Jessop’s (1990, p. 360) term “strategic-relational” depicts the character of the terrain upon which discursive strategies (i.e. the state’s social form) are enacted. The interior of the state as a strategic-relational terrain is “multi-sited and differentiated in its interests and influence” (Gale, 1997, p. iv). Discursive contestation, takes place within complex and shifting “structures of constraints and opportunities” (Cerny, 1990, p. 233). As Jessop (1990, p. 366) suggests, state “powers (in the plural) are activated through the agency of definite political forces in specific conjunctures.” Policy is, therefore, understood as a process, which is determined by dominant discourses or “temporary settlements” (Kenway, 1990, p. 59), in contexts where the state exercises significant influence. The exercising of state influence is through the development of strategies that establish and set the parameters and particulars of policy formulation and enactment.

This perspective seeks to overcome the dichotomy between structure and agency and has the potential to theorise state policy in a way which explores “the intersection of human agency and structural constraint” (Lather, 1991a) in a non-deterministic although not seamless way. Although this approach still emphasises the significance of structure, unlike deterministic structuralist accounts, structure is expressed through agency. From this perspective, analysis of policy processes seeks to examine structure in relation to action and action in relation to structure, rather than emphasising only one of them (Johnston, 1998).

### ***The state is strategically selective***

It is important to acknowledge that contestation in policy processes within the context of the discursive terrain of the state does not occur on a level playing field. Rather, as Jessop argues, it is based on “strategic selectivity” (Jessop, 1990, p. 193). By viewing the state as a social relation enables it to be analysed as the site, the generator and the product of particular strategies. In this way “as an institutional ensemble the state constitutes a terrain upon which different political forces attempt to impart a specific strategic direction to the individual or collective activities of its different branches” (Jessop, 1990, p. 268). In this scenario where the state provides a framework within which different strategies are possible, the state cannot be neutral because it plays a role in “structural selectivity” (Jessop, 1990, p. 119) whereby certain strategies are favoured over others. As Jessop (1990) points out:

... the differential impact of the state system on the capacity of different class (-relevant) forces to pursue their interests in different strategies over a given time horizon is not inscribed in the state system as such but in the relation between state structures and the strategies which different forces adopt towards it. (p. 260)

Hay (1996, p. 7) also argues that state policy processes occur on “an uneven playing field” that is “strategically selective” (Jessop, 1990, pp. 9-10). Its specific form at a given moment in time in a particular national setting is a “crystallisation of past strategies as well as privileging ... [certain] ... current strategies.” In short, the state and its institutions are strategically selective in promoting certain interests over others. Its structures, practices and modus operandi are more amenable to some types of political strategies and certain types of intervention than others (Hay, 1996, p. 7). However, actors also have strategic knowledge of their situation that can be drawn on to overcome the structural constraints which they may encounter. It is necessary therefore, to conceptualise the structure-agency relationship as a complex interaction of actors’ intentions and constraints, rather than as a dichotomy. As Jessop (2001) says:

Applying this approach involves examining how a given structure may privilege some actors, identities, strategies, actions over others; and the ways, if any, in which actors (individual and/or collective) take account of this differential privileging through “strategic-context” analysis when choosing a course of action. (pp. 1220-1221)

It is through integrated notions of discursive contestation and structural constraint that the “messy realities” (Ball, 1990, p. 9) and analytical insights associated with policy

processes can be understood. Policy, therefore, is produced, in Kenway's (1990, p. 59) terms, as "the temporary settlements between diverse competing and unequal forces within civil society, within the state itself and between associated discursive regimes."

The significance of Jessop's (1990) approach is that he attempts to overcome the macro-micro dualism of structure and agency that are often understood to occupy opposite ends of the continuum in debates about state power. Lingard (1993, p. 29) also contends that, by viewing state structures and processes as lacking coherency, the contradictions and inconsistencies that emerge throughout policy processes offer opportunities for individuals and groups to make "political gains through the state." These gains are not only in relation to the context of policy influence and production, but there are also possibilities within the context of reception, where "the relationship between centre(s) and local site(s)" is a central consideration (Lingard, 1993, p. 29).

### **Key Ideas from the Strategic-Relational Approach**

By way of summary, the strategic-relational approach to the state, as illustrated in Figure 1. (p. 28) help us to better understand:

- the nature of the state and its institutions as a strategic-relational terrain characterised by discursive contestation;
- the notion of the state as "strategically selective" (Jessop, 1990, pp. 9-10) in that specific structures and structural configurations selectively reinforce specific forms of action and discourages others;
- that discursive contestation occurs within the shifting ensemble of constraint structures and opportunity structures that enable the facilitation of the strategies of some actors and not others as well as policy as a form of "temporary settlements" (Kenway, 1990, p. 59); and
- that state power can be conceptualised as a "complex social relation" reflecting the different "balance of forces in a determinate conjuncture" (Jessop, 1990, p. 117).

With this understanding a strategic relation approach to the state can guide us in illuminating the following questions:

- What are the effects of the enabling and constraining structures on the discursive contestation of policy processes occurring within the state as a strategic relational terrain?
- How do specific structures and structural configurations selectively reinforce forms of action and discourage others in relation to policy processes?
- How do the actions of actors alter structures which in turn inform the context within which actors act in relation to policy processes?
- In what way do policies reflect a form of policy settlement by the state?
- How is the state shaped by past political strategies and the current strategic selectivity of the state in ways that contribute to particular policy processes and outcomes?
- What role do state institutions and actors play in policy processes?

It is important to note, as Figure 1. (p. 28) illustrates, that the trajectory framework is highly interactive across and between levels. At the macro level of the CPTF, the environmental context and the three perspectives on the nature and role of the state interact with each other as part of the broad policy making context. This suggests that the state shapes and is shaped by the environmental context. By theorising the role of the state in context, it allows a better understanding of both the structural connections and historical contingencies associated with the introduction of education restructuring policies such as *LAEP*.

## **THE MIDDLE-RANGE AGENDA-BUILDING LEVEL**

While the notion of agenda-building was a key feature of my original policy Framework (O’Sullivan, 1999), I now draw on the work of Ball (1990, 1993, 1994a), Taylor (1997), Vidovich (2007) and Bacchi (1999, 2000) to help frame agenda-building processes in terms of policy as discourse. By incorporating policy as discourse as a key component of agenda-building processes, this study reflects a shifting emphasis toward understanding “the production of meaning” (Bacchi, 1999, p. 39), particularly in terms of the way that language works to structure the possibilities of policy proposals (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1994a; Kenway, 1990; Marshall, 1997; Taylor, 1997; Taylor et al., 1997).



The agenda-building level focuses on why demands for policy change occur, the timing associated with policy changes, the way issues access the policy agenda, and how policy issues are constructed and given legitimate status across the policy trajectory (Cook & Skogan, 1990). Because multiple definitions of policy issues are possible, the main question at the agenda-building level is how policy issues are perceived and framed and what social influences are activated in the process. It is through the agenda-building process that certain ideas about the causes and solutions to policy issues are potentially affirmed, which, in turn, may limit the range of alternatives for policy development (Cobb & Elder, 1983; Cobb, Keith-Ross, & Ross, 1976; Eyestone, 1978; C. Jones, 1984; McClain, 1990; Peters, 1993; J. Weiss, 1989). Policy agenda-building processes comprise the following three interrelated components:

- approaches depicting where the impetus for policy change emerges;
- factors facilitating issues accessing agenda status (for example, focusing or triggering events); and
- how dominant policy discourses are framed across the policy trajectory.

### **Facilitating Policy Change: Issue Access to Policy Agendas**

Cobb et al. (1976, pp. 132-135) develop three approaches to explain where the impetus for policy change emerges and the associated patterns of issue access to the policy agenda of government. For each of the following approaches the characteristics of the career of issues accessing the policy agenda of government vary:

- the *inside initiative* approach describes issues that arises within government and that are not expanded in the public arena. Initiators and supporters of the issue seek a private decision within government on the basis that, if the issue reaches the public arena, groups may mobilise against the call for policy change;
- the *outside initiative* approach involves issues initially arising from non-government groups, who then expand interest in the issues to more groups in the population to reach the public agenda. Pressure is then placed on decision-makers to place the issue on the policy agenda and, finally, on the decision-making agenda of government; and
- the *mobilisation* approach describes the process of agenda-building where issues are initiated inside government and, consequently, achieve policy status (and potentially the decision agenda) automatically. Successful implementation of a

policy requires the expansion of the issues onto the public agenda where advocates of a policy position seek to mobilise public interest and support.

The key features which distinguish the models from each other are whether the issue is initiated inside or outside of government, and whether popular concern is mobilised. One of the challenges of drawing on the agenda-building perspective is to identify the impetus for education policy change and the nature of the pattern of access of the issue to the policy agenda of government. The value of an agenda-building approach for this study is that it provides important insights into the key interests involved and the strategies used to increase the salience of education reform so that it appears as a policy issue that requires serious attention by government.

### ***Focusing events***

Policy agendas generally include matters brought before government or government departments for serious consideration and action (Stewart & Ward, 1992, p. 192). A number of writers have emphasised the focusing events that facilitate issues accessing the policy agenda of government. J. Anderson (1990), Sharpe (1992), and Scheberle (1994) suggest that issues are placed on the public, media and government policy agendas through the dynamic interplay of focusing factors which are constructed as grievances or problems. C. Jones and Matthes (1983) identify a political crisis and/or spectacular events, protest activity, and media concerns as focusing events or factors which can facilitate issue access to the policy agenda for consideration by governments. The value of identifying key “focusing events” (Birkland, 1998, p. 54) throughout the enactment of *LAEP* is that it locates which events were constructed as policy issues or problems that required the action or attention of government (see Chapter Eight).

### ***Framing issues: Policy as discourse***

Understanding how language is used as a form of social power to construct focusing events and social problem definitions in such a way that they require government action is of central concern to the policy agenda-building process (Bacchi, 2000; Fulcher, 1989; Taylor et al., 1997). Constructing policy as discourse means that agenda-building processes are conceptualised as a form of discursive contestation where the meaning of policy issues is contested and where language or, in particular, discourse is used as a

vehicle to achieve political ends (Bacchi, 1999, 2000; Ball, 1990, 1994a; Fulcher, 1989; Taylor, 1997).

Discourses developed at the global and macro state level take on greater immediacy at the local agenda-building level where the contestation over meaning or the discursive framework works to order reality in certain ways (Taylor, 1997). In other words, the discursive framework provides a set of possible statements of meaning about a given issue to organise how it will be talked about and whether the issue accesses the policy agenda of government (Kress, 1985, p. 7). As Ball (1990, p. 23) notes, the way in which “emergent discourses are constructed ... sets limits to the possibilities of education policy.”

At any point in time there are generally a number of possible discursive frames circulating for thinking, writing and speaking about policy issues such as education restructuring. However, not all discourses are afforded equal presence or equal authority and certain discourses will operate in such a way that they marginalise or even exclude others. By operating in this way, policy discourses are frameworks of knowledge and power or “ways of constituting knowledge” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108) which are linked to relations of power that both enable and constrain the production of knowledge. Discourses, therefore, delineate conditions for “who can speak, when, where and with what authority”, and conversely, who can not speak (Ball, 1994a, p. 21) and what is counted as *truth* (Foucault, 1986, pp. 229-230).

On the power to make discourse, Ball (1990, p. 18) explains that “meanings thus arise not from language, but from institutional practices, from power relations, from social position.” The engagement of actors in meaning-making throughout the agenda-building process suggests that a power relationship is enmeshed in political discourses and that all actors do not exercise the same power over meaning systems (Jenson, 1997, p. 294). In this sense, discourses reflect political interests “vying for status or power” (Weedon, 1987, p. 41). The struggle is over whose discursive frame is afforded presence at any particular time and the effect of power relations and inequalities in the agenda-building process (Penney & Evans, 1999, p. 112). Drawing on the work of Foucault (1986, p. 237), power is conceptualised as a decentralised network of relations, as tactical and strategic, and based around “techniques and tactics of domination.” Power is thus not limited to top-down hierarchical sovereign power (Foucault, 1980), but is dispersed, mobilised

selectively and strategically by some groups and not others, and operates at multiple levels of agenda-building processes. It is the circulation and exercise of power through a “net-like organization” (Foucault, 1986, p. 234) or webs of power that facilitate certain knowledge to be produced and known.

In relation to agenda-building processes, the exercise of power is best seen in the patterns of support that various definitions of policy issues attain and the differences in the relative visibility and privileging of various discourses relative to others. In the case of *LAEP*, the following areas of inquiry are important.

- Who determines what is going on here?
- How does the policy issue intersect with other contexts of influence?
- How is the policy issue naturalised as a part of everyday social experience?

A policy as discourse approach is also useful because it locates policies in their historical contexts and traces how competing discourses construct and define policy issues within different contexts across the policy trajectory (see Chapters Four and Five). Discourse is also useful to highlight how policies come to be framed in certain ways to reflect how economic, social, political and cultural contexts shape agenda-building processes. This perspective also recognises the characteristics of structural constraints and their implications for the discursive freedom of individuals and institutions in the agenda-building process.

### **Key Ideas from Agenda-Building Approaches**

By way of summary, the key ideas from the agenda-building approaches, as illustrated in Figure 1. (p. 28) help us to better understand:

- the patterns of issues access for achieving government policy agenda status;
- the range of interests and strategies involved at the agenda-building level;
- the focusing events that can move an issue onto the policy agenda of government;
- how and by whom policy issues are framed (policy as discourse) across the policy trajectory;
- how policy issues are portrayed, the possible solutions and whether and in what form they reach the policy agenda status of government;
- the way power relations are enmeshed in policy discourses; and
- the effect of power relations and inequalities in agenda-building processes.

With this understanding, an agenda-building approach can assist in illuminating the following kinds of questions:

- Where did the impetus for policy change emerge?
- What focusing events moved the issue onto the policy agenda of government?
- How do the structures of meanings contained in policy discourses make possible certain forms of conduct and not others?
- How do competing discourses frame policy issues?
- What are the assumptions, contradictions, silences, and consequences embedded in competing discourses?
- How does the historical context shape current policy discourses?
- Whose voices are marginalised?
- How do dominant discourses reflect inequalities and relations of domination throughout the agenda-building process?
- Whose interests are served throughout the agenda-building process?

## **THE MICRO LIVED EXPERIENCE LEVEL**

The micro level of the policy process addresses what Giroux (1985, p. 36) refers to as the “lived cultures”, or as Bacchi (1999, p. 48) describes it, the “lived effects” of the policy process. In essence, this means understanding the effects of discursive events and structural constraints (Penney & Evans, 1999, p. 29) in relation to how human agency is enacted and how participants’ experiences of the policy process are constructed, named, contested and legitimated (Giroux, 1985, p. 30). Integral, therefore, to the “readerly” and “writerly” (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12) nature of policy is how individuals and groups are constructed by policy and how they might exercise effective agency and resistance throughout the policy process. This micro level draws together ideas about discourse, subjectivity and agency and social power and resistance to illuminate the lived experience of participants involved in *LAEP* as they relate to the competing discourses surrounding community participation and policy decision-making processes for directing education reform in Bunbury, Western Australia.

### **Discourse and Subject Positioning**

A key assumption underpinning this micro level of analysis is that discourses are the bearers of subject positions which describe and contribute to the production of the lived

experiences of participants engaged in policy development processes. The notion of subjectivity in this context not only refers to an individual's awareness or consciousness of themselves but also the process by which individuals are constructed socially in different forms through discourse (Weedon, 1997). By focusing on the processes of subject construction and subject location within circulating discourses available to participants involved in *LAEP*, stories of the lived experience of policy construction and reconstruction at the micro level, particularly in relation to issues of agency and resistance, can be understood (J. Dewar, 1992). This approach suggests that the frames of meaning embedded in discourses can delineate "the horizons of possible speech but also the horizons of possible actions" (Shapiro, 1981, p. 130).

### ***Subjectivity and social agency***

The notion of subject positioning offers one entry site from which to analyse how individual stories of the policy processes are constituted from circulating discourses. How human agency is enacted at the micro level is a key issue for understanding policy change. While Foucault's (1980) approach promotes the idea of the constituted decentred *subject* as an effect of power relations, my approach reflects the orientation of Weedon (1997) and B. Davies (1991) whose concept of the *subject* has a more active focus on human agency. For Weedon (1997), whilst individuals are unable to control their overall direction they are still able to choose among social practices available to them. B. Davies (1991) uses the notion of "authorship" to capture these ideas by depicting people as:

Speaking subjects aware of the different ways in which they are made subject, who take up the act of *authorship*, of speaking and writing in ways that are disruptive of current discourses, that invert, invent and break old bonds, that create new subject positions. (p. 50)

She also contends that, "agency is never freedom from discursive contestation of self but the capacity to recognise that constitution and to resist, subvert and change discourses themselves through which one is being constituted" (B. Davies, 1991, p. 51). According to B. Davies (1991, p. 51), "authority" or "agency" as it relates to the micro level of the policy process may be thought of as:

- "the discursive constitution of a particular individual as having presence (rather than absence), that is, as having access to a subject position in which they have the right to speak and to be heard" (p. 51);

- “the discursive constitution of that person as author of their own multiple meanings” (p. 51);
- the speakers who mobilise existing discourses in new ways by “inverting, inventing and breaking old patterns” (p. 51); and
- “the sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meanings in any one discourse, and forge something new, through a combination of previously unrelated discourses, through the invention of words and concepts which capture a shift in consciousness that is beginning to occur, or through imagining not what is but what might be” (p. 51).

This view of the relationship between subjectivity and agency is essentially encapsulated in the notion of an “embodied speaker” who, as B. Davies (1991, pp. 50-51) explains, “constitutes and is constituted by the discursive practices of the collectives of which they are a member.” While the form of discursive practices can be powerful, the subject is also able to exercise agency in relation to discursive practices (B. Davies, 1992). So, while abandoning modernist notions of a unitary self and a coherent agency, this approach regards subjectivity as decentred and fractured and, therefore, holds the possibility of purposive action aimed at preferred change throughout the policy process.

### ***Power and resistance***

Discourses constitute subjectivity and subject positions in ways that produce power effects. To understand how effective agency is exercised requires addressing how power relations are produced, reproduced or resisted at the micro lived experience level of the policy process (Weedon, 1997). It is not power itself that constructs human subjectivity. Power is embedded in discourses which can produce unequal social relations by privileging individual subjectivities and subject positions through the unequal distribution of power. In this sense, subjectivity is a process of self-formation in which individuals internalise social power relations and where individual thoughts and actions are shaped by and reflect social power relations. From this perspective, power is not possessed by individuals, moreover, its production is part of a process which occurs at an individual, institutional and societal level to construct subjectivity and reality in certain ways (Clegg, 1989). For example, *LAEP* is a discursive site in which discourses of education connect with other discourses to establish certain unequal relations of power between the various participating individuals. These relations of power place the

participating individuals into subject positions that are, themselves, the vehicle in which power is invested. This, in turn, reinforces dominant and subordinate power relations where those who occupy powerful subject positions or subjectivities use this power to enforce the prevailing discourse and certain types of relationships.

The presence of power also presents opportunities for exercising agency through resistance to hegemonic discourses and subject positions. This interrelationship between power and resistance is theorised by Foucault (1981, p. 95) who contends that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” The presence of power suggests opportunities for resistance which, along with the operations of knowledge, can present as a possibility for producing change (Sawicki, 1991).

Resistance or counter hegemony engages in the struggle to transform “dominating ideas, social relations, practices and institutions” (Connole, Smith, & Wiseman, 1993, p. 189). Resistance is also where a subject, through discourse, is an agent, an actor or participant within power relations and exercises opposition to authority or control (Street, 1992). The key here is the individual’s ability to “take up” or to negotiate among many complex and often an “impossible array” of contradictory subject positions with the view to establishing a more influential position within the social interactions (Walkerdine, 1990, p. 47). As Weedon (1997) argues, where there is incongruence between the subject position offered in a discourse and an individual interest, individuals demonstrate resistance to that position. By taking up new subject positions, an individual can resist certain discourses in order to (re)invent new discourses thus offering the possibility of political choices (Sawicki, 1991). It is through identifying the tensions, conflicts and inequalities that provide space for resistance and the enactment of human agency through critique and acts of resistance via counter hegemonic discourses that the lived experience of policy construction and reconstruction at the micro level of the policy process can be illuminated (Bowe et al., 1992).

### **Key Ideas from the Lived Experience of the Policy Process**

By way of summary, the lived experience level of the policy trajectory, as illustrated in Figure 1. (p. 28) help us to better understand:

- the various subject positions available to participants via discourses in the policy process;



- the ways that policy participants take up the act of “authorship” (B. Davies, 1991, p. 50) as a way of exercising agency in the policy process to create new subject positions and new discourses;
- that participants can create new subject positions as a way of resisting dominant or subordinate power relations; and
- how counter hegemonic discourses enable new ways of participating in policy decision-making and reconstruction at the micro level.

With this understanding, the lived experience approach can assist in illuminating the following kinds of questions:

- What subject positions are available within the dominant discourses in the policy process?
- Who is granted authoritative positions within dominant discourses?
- How is agency exercised through the policy process and what strategies do participants identify as creating opportunities for change?
- What reverse or counter hegemonic discourses and alternative subject positions are available in the policy process?
- Where are the sites of resistance/struggle in the policy process?
- How are the relations of power within discursive sites resisted, and/or maintained and reproduced?

As Figure 1. (p. 28) also shows, a number of key interacting concepts that arise from critical theory and the critical policy analysis literature inform all levels of the CPTF. These factors address the issues, interests and values promoted and legitimated through the policy process. These organising concepts help me to understand the policy process in the following ways:

- the structure and analysis of power relations;
- spaces for resistance;
- the role of ideology and discourse as power/knowledge; and
- issues of structural inequality for different classes of people.

These aspects are mediated through state institutions at the middle-range level and play a pivotal role at all levels of the policy development process, not only in terms of how actors engage in the policy process, but also the way that state institutions constrain as well as create opportunities for policy change.

## SUMMARY

Education policy analysis has been dominated by traditional paradigms that typically study policy as a linear progression from development to implementation. Increasingly, education policy analysts have challenged the value of traditional policy analysis models and drawn on critical modernist/structural and postmodernist/postructural theories and concepts to develop policy analysis models through which to explore education policy formulation and enactment processes. Rather than investigate *LAEP* through existing critical education policy analysis frameworks, I have developed a CPTF which I draw on throughout the following chapters to explore *LAEP*. A policy trajectory approach (Ball, 1990, 1993, 1997) that is informed by critical theory and postmodern/postructural ideas and concepts forms the basis of the CPTF. This non-linear view of policy combines both structural and interactive levels of analysis into one policy analysis framework and addresses education reform policies generated at the macro structural (global, nation-state) level; middle-range institutional level of agenda-building, and the micro, personal lived and group experience level of the policy process.

To avoid the potentially deterministic application of the CPTF to *LAEP*, I have adopted a critically reflexive approach in the following chapters so that theory and data mutually inform the enactment of *LAEP*. Doing so presents opportunities for the limitations and omissions of the framework as an explanatory tool for understanding the enactment of *LAEP* to be made visible, and allows the incorporation of additional theories and concepts that potentially offer additional analytical insight.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the research design used to investigate key participants' experience of the enactment of *LAEP* in Bunbury. In developing a research design for *LAEP*, I faced the methodological challenge of portraying a policy process that is characterised by Ball's (1990, p. 9) label of "messy realities." Because the research is located within the domain of critical policy analysis, I also require a methodological approach that reflects the "socially critical" intent (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 113) of the study and portrays policy as a multi-layered process of meaning-making (Taylor, 1997; Taylor et al., 1997). The methodology also needs to be compatible with the assumptions informing the CPTF and to facilitate the collection of data at the three different levels of analysis so that the explanation of large scale macro social, economic, political and cultural issues and structures can be related to explanations of micro level issues that speak to the lived experiences of participants.

To describe the research design and address the methodological issues for this study the chapter comprises five main sections. The first section locates the research within the broad field of qualitative research/inquiry, identifies the methodology for this study as a critical ethnography and discusses the value of and limitations of applying a conventional ethnographic methodology to *LAEP*. The second section details how the aims and theory of a critical ethnographic methodology are incorporated into the research design to investigate *LAEP*. Section three identifies the primary and secondary data collection methods and processes used in this study. I also adopt a reflexive posture to critically reflect on the politics of interviewing policy elites. Section four details the critical data analysis process drawn on to analyse primary and secondary data sources. The limitations of the research are also identified. In the final section, I discuss how I have endeavoured to establish the trustworthiness of the research and the ethical issues that are relevant to the study.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

This research is located in the broad field of qualitative research/enquiry and is characterised as postpositivist, critical social research. The qualitative research paradigm incorporates a set of assumptions or a world view (Creswell, 1998, p. 74) that resonates with my approach to this research. These are:

- ontologically, reality is subjective and multiple;
- epistemologically, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is interactive; and
- axiomatically, the research is value laden (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, pp. 256-265).

The value of a qualitative approach to investigate *LAEP* is that it can help us to understand the meaning that people give to social phenomena and to recognise the role of language in how people socially construct their world (Garman, 1994). Qualitative enquiry also assists our understanding of how complex social experiences like *LAEP* are given meaning within context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2003; Patton, 2002). It also offers a range of research methods to assist in mapping the “messiness and complexity” (Ball, 1990, p. 9) that gives life to the “inconsistencies, misreadings, misinterpretations as well as accommodation and perhaps resistance” of the *LAEP* policy process (Maguire & Ball, 1994, p. 282).

In positioning the methodology within the qualitative research paradigm, I also draw on a critical ethnographic methodology to address the “socially critical” intent (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 113) of the study. This methodology is also commonly used in the emergent field of education policy sociology (Ball, 1994a; Gale, 2001; Troyna, 1994). In the tradition of critical ethnographic research, my study makes explicit value judgments, engages in social and political critique and integrates a critically reflective posture (Adkins & Gunzenhauser, 1999; Grace, 1998; Jordan & Yeomans, 1995; Lather, 1986b). To this end, the study is ethnographic in the sense of doing “descriptive studies” (Wolcott, 1988, p. 202) and “openly ideological” (Lather, 1986a, p. 63) in the way that it relates theoretical constructs from critical social theory to analyse the research participants’ understandings and experiences of *LAEP*. Because critical ethnography as a style of analysis and discourse appropriates the tools of ethnography (J. Thomas, 1993a), I now identify the aspects from conventional ethnography that I draw on to inform the research

design for this study and discuss the limitations of a conventional ethnographic approach when undertaking social critical research.

### **Conventional Ethnography and the Art of Description**

Ethnographic research is a form of qualitative research that comes from the discipline of social and cultural anthropology (Patton & Westby, 1992, p. 2). Ethnographers typically spend a significant amount of time engaging in field work where they immerse themselves in the lives of the people they study and seek to place the phenomena studied in their social and cultural context (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). As L. Angus (1986b, p. 62) explains, “the essential feature of most ethnographic research is that it attempts above all to describe, and then to interpret, the nature of social discourse amongst a group of people.” Hence, ethnography is often referred to as the “science of cultural description” (Wolcott, 1975, p. 112). The following ideas from conventional ethnography foreground the critical ethnographic approach used in this study. It is these ideas that enable policy researchers to uncover multiple meanings and interpretations associated with educational policy as well as the multi-layered nature of policy processes.

*Naturalism* refers to social research methods which grapple with illumination of the ‘natural’ processes of social action and interaction. The central argument is that human behaviour can only be understood within the context it occurs and assumed that a person’s behaviour reflects the meaning that a situation has for them. The naturalistic approach (using observation or unstructured, in-depth interviews), therefore, places the researcher in a better position to interpret or understand social actions in context (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Patton, 1990; Patton & Westby, 1992; Spindler & Spindler, 1992).

*The cultural context* requires that ethnographers be committed to understanding events and social interactions within a specific cultural context. The focus is on how specific cultures and subcultures shape both the interpretation and interaction of the research participants (Patton & Westby, 1992; J. Thomas, 1993a; Wolcott, 1980).

*Immersion and connection* is synonymous with getting close to one’s field of investigation. The strategic and careful development of close connections with participants is a central feature of ethnographic research (Agar, 1980) that aims to view social experiences, interactions and events from the point of view of the participants.

Rather than impose their own views on the research situation, ethnographers attempt to achieve an understanding of what the social processes and actions mean for the participants (L. Harvey & MacDonald, 1993, p. 177).

*Privileging local knowledge* suggests that the purpose of ethnography is not to produce universal knowledge or a grand theory. Rather, the epistemological positioning is one that privileges local knowledge and sees theory building as a means of creating particular truths (Geertz, 1973). This suggests a more tentative, open and partial interpretation of the research data and draws attention to matters of uncertainty regarding a situation or phenomenon. Prasad (1997) asserts that it is only through understanding micro level interactions that we can comprehend macro structures.

*The use of thick description* refers to a researcher's increasing understanding through sense-making or meaning-making of participants' experiences in relation to particular phenomena. Thick description identifies the multi-layered significance of events and locates them within their social and cultural context (Geertz, 1973, 1993).

By describing the "actions and interactions" of participants involved in *LAEP*, as well as their intentions, motives, reasons and their intersubjective being (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 67), this study fits comfortably within the broader methodological tradition of ethnography. This study is an ethnographic account to the extent that it seeks to describe the events, experiences and processes around *LAEP* within the broader cultural and structural context.

### ***Limitations of conventional ethnography: Issues of immediacy***

Over recent years, there has been extensive discussion of both the benefits and the limitations of conventional ethnography as a research methodology (G. Anderson, 1989; L. Angus, 1986a; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004; Smyth et al., 2000; J. Thomas, 1993a). J. Thomas (1982) suggests that while:

One value of ethnographic research is its focus upon how people enact a social world by conferring and negotiating meaning through social interaction ... ethnography may not carry this project of social construction far enough. By overemphasizing the given, ethnography rarely raises above the immediacy of the examined situation. (p. 129)

Conventional ethnography contains a number of shortcomings for understanding the lived experience of participating in *LAEP*. First, the epistemological relativism

underpinning conventional ethnography attracts considerable criticism on the basis that the construction of meanings as reality, while a collaborative process, ignores the point that “*whatever* definition of a situation is finally to prevail within a group of actors it is essentially one that is influenced by relationships of power” (L. Angus, 1986b, p. 67). Second, the structural factors, which constrain human actors, are largely overlooked thus preventing an “understanding of the dialectic between continuity and change and between human agency and social structure” (L. Angus, 1986b, p. 68). Third, conventional (interpretive) ethnography fails to acknowledge and interrogate the way ideas, practices, interests and structures gain and maintain prominence in social contexts (J. Thomas, 1982). Finally, the researcher in conventional ethnography is cast in the role of “disinterested researcher” which implies a positioning of the researcher as objective and “value-free” (Connole et al., 1993, p. 219). This construction of the role of the researcher is limited by its lack of acknowledgement of how the researcher is an integral part of the research context and processes in a way that problematises the relationship between the researcher and participants and issues of representation and narration (Altheide & Johnson, 1998, pp. 285-286).

To address some of these shortcomings and the “policing structure of ... [the] sovereign discourses” of traditional ethnography (McLaren, 1992, p. 77), I turn to the recent work of critical ethnographers to examine how conventional ethnography has been reframed into a political project (Adkins & Gunzenhauser, 1999; G. Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996, 2001; Carspecken & MacGillivray, 1998; Jordan & Yeomans, 1995; Lather, 1991b; McLaren, 1992; J. Thomas, 1993a). I now explore the relationship between critical social theory and critical ethnography and identify the theoretical and practice “promises” of critical ethnography (Gunzenhauser, 1999, p. 2) that form part of the research design for this study.

## **CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODOLOGY**

A definitive characteristic of critical ethnography is that it draws on critical social theory for its theoretical formulation (G. Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Maseman, 1982; Quantz, 1992; J. Thomas, 1993a). Critical ethnography, according to Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, p. 145), attempts to “connect critical theory with the particularity of everyday experience ... [while at the same time] redefining the nature of ethnographic research in a critical manner.” It is the implications of this

theoretical shift that makes critical ethnography a more appropriate methodology for the study of *LAEP* within the context of the CPTF outlined earlier (see Chapter Two). For example, the focus on the meanings people give to social phenomena, which are a hallmark of qualitative and ethnographic research, do not exist in isolation but in relation to the social structures in which people live and operate. Critical ethnographic research, therefore, offers a way of representing reality that is “capable of providing social explanations sensitive to the complex relationship between human agency and social structure” (G. Anderson, 1989, p. 251). Issues of agency and structure are regarded as equally important and dialectically interrelated. As L. Angus (1986b) points out:

[Critical ethnography] ... is capable of bridging the gap between macro- and micro- analysis because it addresses the dialectic between broad issues of social structure and issues of social interaction, which involve human agents. Moreover ... critical ethnography is also appropriate for the cumulative work of interrogating theory with data and vice versa. (p. 61)

Thus the methodological assumptions informing critical ethnography are compatible with the CPTF, which is designed to address the relationship between social structure and political agency throughout the policy process.

### **Theoretical and Practice Promises**

Critical ethnography, as a methodology to investigate *LAEP*, moves beyond merely describing the lived experiences of participants and offers a number of theoretical and practice “promises” (Gunzenhauser, 1999, p. 2) that help to uncover how the policy enactment processes exemplify domination and resistance. My research design incorporates the following theoretical and practice “promises” to create a research process that is genuinely “socially critical” (Smyth et al., 2000, p. 113).

*Voice: Communicates and gives voice to the marginalised.* Critical ethnography works politically as it gives voice to research participants and uses theoretical constructs to describe their experience in relation to the larger social context, specifically (oppressive) social structures. In this sense, critical ethnography has the potential to fulfil an explicit emancipatory and empowering political agenda (Gunzenhauser, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). This approach also recognises the existence of multiple voices in the processes of meaning-making and, in doing so, identifies whose interests are represented (Quantz, 1992).



*Power: Uncovers differential power relations.* A key area of concern in critical ethnography is the identification of the ways in which power influences the research situation. This means connecting observed phenomena and participants' lived experiences to theories of power in a way that facilitates reflection on how power is embedded in the research process (Gunzenhauser, 1999; Quantz, 1992).

*Agency: Finds agency in the actions of the marginalised.* Critical ethnography provides researchers with a methodology capable of identifying spaces for social agency, change and resistance within oppressive social, economic and political structures (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

*Social critique: Connects lived experiences to social critique.* Critical ethnography links the analysis of lived experience to social critique (G. Anderson, 1989, 1994; Carspecken, 1996; Jordan & Yeomans, 1995; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Quantz, 1992; J. Thomas, 1993a). In addition to its openly political purpose, critical ethnography allows an analysis of social relations and acknowledges social theory as an important lens through which to analyse data which describes participants' experiences and understanding of a particular phenomenon (G. Anderson, 1989; Carspecken, 1996; Fine, 1991; Gunzenhauser, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather & Smithies, 1997; McLaren, 1987; Quantz, 1992; Roman, 1993).

Throughout the *LAEP* research process these theoretical and practice “promises” (Gunzenhauser, 1999, p. 2) emerge in different ways and with varying degrees of prominence.

### **Transformatory and Political Intent of Study**

One of the aims of critical ethnography is to foster a spirit of social critique for the purpose of social transformation and emancipation (G. Anderson, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1986a; Popkewitz, 1990). Embedded in the theoretical and practice “promises” (Gunzenhauser, 1999, p. 2) outlined above is a set of ideas which guide critical research. While the political intent of the study in terms of its transformative potential is partly addressed through issues of voice and agency, it is also important to clarify how this study could contribute to social improvement.

While critical research methodologies are explicitly supportive of empowerment and transformational processes, R. Smith (1993) contends that they are not empowering in the

same ways. He identifies two distinct approaches. Some critical methodologies can potentially be emancipatory while others are limited to being critical in the sense that they provide a social critique (R. Smith, 1993, pp. 79-81). Critical methodologies that primarily focus on social critique aim to heighten understanding, whereas critical methodologies with an emancipatory intent facilitate and support social action in the form of empowerment as collective action/struggle within the research process (p. 81).

The phase of *LAEP* that I have chosen to research places limitations on the emancipatory and empowering potential of the study. Because the planning processes for *LAEP* occurred from 1998 to the year 2000, the study is unavoidably retrospective. Unlike other forms of emancipatory research, the aim of this study is therefore, not to transform the practices of participants as they engage in political struggle, but to raise political consciousness through social critique. This approach alerts individuals about the political or ideological biases of policy processes through ideological critique and participatory dialogue. In keeping with the critical intent and theoretical positioning of the CPTF, political consciousness raising, like R. Smith (1993) suggests, has been attempted throughout this study by reframing commonsense understandings into a social and political context through:

- developing scepticism about appearances;
- questioning assumptions of neutrality and equality in educational provisions;
- recognising the ‘raced’, classed and gendered nature of [the policy process]; and
- recognising historical and political antecedents to contemporary [policy] practices. (p. 80)

The dissemination of the research findings through an ongoing engagement and reporting back of interpretations to participants is also central to achieving social improvement (Francis, 2000; Skeggs, 1994).

### **Ethnographic Research and Critical Reflexivity**

Ethnographic research is a highly problematic and contested terrain depicting a crisis of representation and legitimation (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Lather, 1991b; Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Segall, 2001) over the relations of production (Carspecken, 1996; Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Clifford, 1986; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Simon and Dippo

(1986) suggest that a critical ethnography must “reflexively address its own situated character.” In their view, reflexivity is about recognising that “most ethnographic data is ‘produced’ and not ‘found’” (p. 200). Often condemned as apolitical, reflexivity, on the contrary, can be seen as opening the way to a more radical consciousness of self in facing the political dimensions of fieldwork and constructing knowledge. Smyth and Shacklock (1998a) explain:

... reflexivity is an attempt to identify, do something about, and acknowledge the limitations of the research: its location, its subjects, its process, its theoretical context, its data, its analysis, and how accounts recognize that the construction of knowledge takes place in the world and not apart from it .... there are no privileged views on getting the truth in the generation of research problems, processes, and accounts because these are, like the researcher, socially situated. (p.7)

By adopting a critically reflexive approach throughout the research process, I recognise that I cannot assume to be able to transcend my *positionality* and that I am an integral part of the research process. Being “openly ideological” (Lather, 1986a, p. 63) means being aware of my value commitments and personal history by critically reflecting on the ways in which they affect power relations in the field, the nature of the interactions between the researcher and the researched, and how I construct knowledge in this study. This requires openly acknowledging that I bring a socially critical agenda (as discussed in Chapter One) to this research that has not only informed the development of the CPTF but also guided my approach to interviewing and the analysis of the data.

## **DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Ethnography uses a wide range of data collection methods including in-depth interviews, life histories, document analysis and non-participant and participant observation (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999). Participant observation is frequently regarded as the main method of ethnographic research (Agar, 1996; Gold, 1958; Holy, 1984; Van Maanen, 1996). However, L. Harvey and McDonald (1993) contend that ethnography does not necessarily have to include a participant observation element; ethnography can be done exclusively through non-participant observation and unstructured interviews. Being a retrospective study, participant observation is not possible as a method for data collection. Therefore, the main sources of data to address the research questions at the three levels of the policy trajectory are:

- in-depth interviews (Burgess, 1984, 1988; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995; Walker, 1985); and
- primary and secondary documents (Patton, 1990; Sarantakos, 1998; Van Willigen & Dewalt, 1985).

### **In-depth Interviews as Ethnographic Method**

Walker (1985, p. 4) characterises the in-depth interview as a “conversation” in which the “researcher encourages the research participant to relate, in their own terms, their experiences and attitudes that are relevant to the research problem.” Ethnographic interviews tend to be totally unstructured and open-ended and rely entirely on the spontaneous development of questions in the flow of conversation (Patton, 1990). There may be a series of topics to be discussed but there are no preconceived questions. The benefit of this approach is that it enables participants throughout the interview process to retain control over how they convey their experiences, self-understanding, and perspectives on their lived world (Kvale, 1996). The researcher is then in a position to understand the participant’s point of view and the meaning of their experiences.

The limitations, however of a totally open-ended in-depth interview approach when conducting critical ethnographic social research is explained by D. Wainwright (1997):

Whilst this [open-ended in-depth interviews] may be a valid approach for traditional ethnography ... critical ethnography may entail a much more focused approach to interviewing, in which questions are asked about specific issues derived from the broader social critique .... whilst critical ethnographers are keen not to ask leading questions and to enable informants to express their views fully, the research agenda and scope of the study are not primarily determined by the informants. Rather, a dialectical approach is adopted, allowing the researcher to oscillate between the world view of the informant, (e.g., by departing from the interview schedule to pursue an interesting line of inquiry), and the insights offered by the historical and structural analysis, which may enable the constructs and categories employed by the informant to be actively deconstructed during the course of the interview ... for the critical ethnographer validity depends upon getting beneath the surface appearances of everyday life to reveal the extent to which they are constituted by ideology or discourse. Thus, rather than commencing the process of data collection with an ‘empty head’ the critical ethnographer is pre-armed with insights gleaned from social critique. (n.p.)

In light of D. Wainwright’s (1997) comment, I used in-depth semi structured interviews, similar to those engaged in by an ethnographer, to have “conversations with a purpose”

(Burgess, 1984, p. 102), where the purpose of the dialogue is to make meaning together (Reissman, 1993). Semi-structured interviews were considered appropriate for this study because they allowed similar information to be obtained from all participants while retaining flexibility to hear what specific issues were important to each participant and to explore complex issues in more detail. They also allowed me to seek clarification by providing the opportunity for a discourse between interviewer and interviewee that moved beyond “surface talk to a rich discussion of thoughts and feelings” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 80). Semi-structured interviews also facilitated access to information about key events throughout *LAEP* that could not be observed directly because of the retrospective nature of the study (R. Burns, 1994).

To elicit responses from participants, three important elements of the in-depth interview process were adopted. First, I emphasised that the interview was to be a conversation rather than a series of questions and answers. Second, each interview was sufficiently long for rapport to be established between the two parties, usually between one-and-a-half and two hours. Third, because the interviews allowed informants the freedom to recall and expound on events from their perspective, the nature of the response provided the direction that the interview should take next.

Because participants were drawn from different stakeholder groups which broadly reflected the three levels of the CPTF, the semi-structured interview format comprised a set of *Interview Topics* (see Appendix 1) relevant to all participants as well as topics that were specific to the different stakeholder groups. The topics covered by all of the participants enabled comparisons across all levels of the trajectory and highlighted participants’ similarities as well as differences in the meaning attributed to the *LAEP* process. Within the broad topics for discussion, probes took the form of Burgess’ (1984) three main types of questions for semi-structured interviews:

First, descriptive questions which allow informants to provide statements about their activities. Secondly, structural questions which attempt to find out *how* informants organise their knowledge and, finally, contrast questions which allow informants to discuss the meanings of situations and provide an opportunity for comparisons to take place between situations and events in the informants’ [sic] world. (pp. 111-112)

For example, under the heading of participating in *LAEP*, a descriptive question included “what was your role in *LAEP*?” A structural question enquired as to how the decisions

were made throughout *LAEP* and who participated. A follow-up contrast question within a particular topic asked “from your interpretation of the *LAEP Framework*, did the decision-making processes throughout *LAEP* meet your expectations?” The follow-up questions pursued with participants were informed by my knowledge about *LAEP*, documentation about *LAEP*, academic literature, key concepts informing the CPTF, newspaper articles and issues arising in interviews with participants. The semi-structured interview, which had been prepared to encourage some commonality of coverage in each interview, appeared to serve the purpose well despite modifications throughout the interview phase of the study.

### ***Accessing and interviewing participants***

In total, 25 key informants participated in the study. Because the study called for “specific information from specific informants who are knowledgeable about the process under consideration” (Hornby & Symon, 1994, p. 169), participants were identified using purposeful or purposive sampling (Alston & Bowles, 1998; Hornby & Symon, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; May, 1993; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Purposive or theoretical sampling is a technique in qualitative research which allows the researcher to choose sites which may increase the scope or range of data exposed. As Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 45) point out, this approach will “expand the variability” of the sample. This process enabled me to initially identify key participants at the three different levels of the policy trajectory. Within the context of this research, community, parent and school participants represented the micro level of the policy trajectory.

The EDWA participants from the Bunbury District Office represented the middle-range bureaucratic level of the CPTF, and the participants from the Head Office of EDWA reflected the macro level of the State of Western Australia. Participants from the EDWA District and Head Office were also regarded as policy elites or fitted the category of “researching up” (Walford, 1994a, p. 2) because they inhabited senior and powerful positions within the EDWA bureaucracy. It is important to note, however, that *elite informants* is not a fixed category and that many of the parent and community participants, while not policy elites within the context of this study, were regarded as elite within their professional contexts.

I commenced the research interview process by interviewing a participant from each level of the policy trajectory. Following these three interviews, which yielded competing and contradictory understandings of the *LAEP* process and associated incidents and events, I decided to triangulate information across the levels of the policy trajectory and to adjust the topics for discussion in the semi-structured interview proforma. During the initial interviews with the three participants from the different levels of the CPTF, a snowball sampling procedure was used to identify potential participants (Burgess, 1984; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Sarantakos, 1998; Seidman, 1991). Because I was not familiar with all of the potential participants in the Bunbury District Office and Head Office of EDWA the key informants were asked to identify additional stakeholders in *LAEP*. As I had anticipated, the snowball process continued to identify participants at the macro, middle-range and micro levels of the trajectory. The criteria adopted for terminating the snowball procedure was that individuals from all of the various stakeholder groups identified had been interviewed and that the same information was reported across the various groups of stakeholders (Douglas, 1976; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Seidman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Initial contact was made with each potential informant by telephone to obtain provisional agreement to participate in the research project. Many of the people contacted said that they welcomed the opportunity to discuss *LAEP* and all agreed to be interviewed. While participants at the middle-range and macro level of the trajectory fitted the category of “researching up” (Walford, 1994a, p. 2), unlike other studies which report difficulties with gaining access to elites (Hertz & Imber, 1993; R. Thomas, 1995), I had no difficulty with access or in obtaining their agreement to participate in the study. Following suggestions by Yeager and Kram (1995, pp. 44-46) regarding engaging elite participants, I was careful to package the research project in a way that promoted it as an important and relevant policy study and also in a way that was non-threatening. Following provisional agreement to participate in the study, an *Invitation to Participate in the Study* (see Appendix 2) explaining the rationale for the research, and a *Disclosure and Informed Interview Consent Form* (see Appendix 3) were sent to each participant. I then re-contacted participants to set an interview date. The interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s choice of location. Two of the interviews were conducted by telephone because the participants had moved to remote locations. The interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participants.

Because the *LAEP* methodology is characterised as postpositivist, qualitative and socially critical, I self-consciously reflect on how my values and my critical theoretical orientation influenced the way I engaged with participants and conducted the overall research project. The “openly ideological” (Lather, 1986a, p. 63) nature of this study requires a high level of transparency in how I understand and represent the participants’ experiences of *LAEP*, how I acknowledge the tensions that arise in the research and reveal how they are managed. To this end, I used a number of reflective tools including journaling (Janesick, 2003), critical partner dialogue (M. Young, 1999) and a collegiate support group.

Throughout all the interviews I was also cognisant of Wood’s (1992) account of the necessary skills to ensure that rapport was built with the participants to encourage them to critically reflect on their experiences of *LAEP*. Those skills include listening, which demonstrates that the interviewer is hearing, responding, and when appropriate constructing interpretations; focusing, or keeping the interview on the topic; seeking explanation where information is partial or unclear; and ascertaining the accuracy of the information by rephrasing and summarising. In this way, I attempted to become a partner with the informant working with them to construct their story (H. Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991). Prior to commencing the interviews I had anticipated that the interview process could be an emotionally cathartic experience for some participants, particularly given that *LAEP* was regarded as a highly conflictual process. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter One, the *LAEP* process was reactivated by EDWA within a month of the commencement of this study. While none of the teacher, non-teacher and parent participants in this study were directly involved in the reactivated *LAEP* process, many expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which it was being conducted. Because my own professional background is social work, I am very familiar with interviewing people regarding sensitive issues where high levels of emotion are expressed. I was, therefore, very careful to create an environment in which participants could freely express their feelings without judgement. I also validated their right to have feelings about and responses to the *LAEP* process. This approach was essential for building rapport and trust.

Participants interviewed at the micro level of the policy trajectory granted me “insider status” (Rooney, 2005, p. 6) because I was a local person who had knowledge about *LAEP* and had a prior collegial working relationship and/or some form of social relationship with many of the participants. This allowed me to position the interviews



more as a joint effort in exploring issues of mutual interest and shared experiences rather than as an “outsider” (Rooney, 2005, p. 6) attempting to elicit information from an informant. While my familiarity with many of the parent and community participants could have caused a less critical analysis of issues, I saw this as an opportunity to take some risks in the interview process and to present alternative explanations of the causes of events or incidents, in other words, to challenge their constructions of *LAEP*. In many ways this approach shifted the focus in some interviews from blaming individuals for the problems with *LAEP* to a discussion of other factors potentially affecting education reform.

### ***The politics of interviewing: Researching up and reflexivity***

Interviewing participants in the category of policy elites or “researching up” (Walford, 1994a, p. 2) presented issues and dilemmas which have important implications for the mode of interviewing (Ball, 1994b). Ball (1994b, p. 113) contends that the interview process is an “extension of a play of power” rather than being removed from it. From this perspective, the relationship between policy elites and researchers is not based on a “one-dimensional hierarchy ... power exists on various levels and operates in different directions (Duke, 2002, p. 52). The ongoing negotiation of issues of status and power, are therefore, a central element of the research relationship (Ball, 1994b; Neal, 1995; R. Thomas, 1995; Walford, 1994a). Throughout the fieldwork process the exercising of power by the researcher can therefore, vary depending on the different respondents and situations encountered and the nature of the relationships which develop.

During the interview process I constantly questioned in my fieldwork journal what it meant to be a critical policy researcher. The dilemmas and tensions I experienced when managing issues of power and authority when interviewing policy elites were central to the interview process. I was concerned that probing beyond surface issues or the rhetoric of the policy elites would jeopardise, not only the interviews, but my access to others within the EDWA bureaucracy and policy network. Numerous reflexive accounts by researchers who had felt daunted and intimidated throughout the interview process with male elite professionals failed to suggest a way forward. Many of these accounts only described the research experience. Following extensive discussion with a critical friend and my collegial support group, I realised that, as a critical researcher I needed to find ways to address my sense of disempowerment with elite participants as well as to “dig

beneath surface appearances” (L. Harvey, 1990, p. 14) to understand the tensions, contradictions and inequitable power relations that appeared to characterise the experience of many of the participants at the micro level of the policy trajectory.

As discussed in Chapter One, being a critical researcher meant engaging in dialogue with elite policy actors through the fieldwork process in ways that questioned the nature of the practices that emerged throughout the enactment of *LAEP*. Penney (2001, p. 8) says critical researchers need to be “player[s] in the policy game” which, at times requires asking some uncomfortable questions. When interviewing professional male policy elites, I needed to find ways of exploring “spaces for dialogue” (Penney, 2001, p. 8) and to confront the discomfort, tensions and fears of not being seen as compliant and supportive of their view of *LAEP* (Tooley & Darby, 1998). It was this experience that deepened my understanding of how critical policy research is a political act, and “interviews as conversations” (Burgess, 1984, p. 102) are also, as Penney says (2001, p. 8), “political conversations” which present tensions, contradictions, dilemmas and possibilities of presenting alternative constructions of reality.

I found interviewing predominantly men in powerful positions within their professional environments daunting and at times struggled with a sense of powerlessness. One way forward was to identify the social and cultural capital I possessed to give me some form of leverage in the interview process with policy elites. In my case the intersection of age, gender, academic and research credentials, and as a local parent with children in the public schooling system, helped me to define my status in relation to elite participants and their institutional power base. At times I deliberately drew on these roles to address the power imbalance between me and the policy elites I was interviewing. To bridge the power differential between policy elites and me involved the reconciliation of various roles: insider and outsider, being compliant researcher and a sounding board, empathetic and critical interrogator, knowledgeable and naive researcher.

Although gaining access to the policy elites was not an issue, negotiating their disclosure of personal opinions or reflections beyond the official line, rather than their blaming community people and individuals at the micro and middle-range levels of the trajectory for the problems with *LAEP*, proved challenging. R. Thomas (1995, p. 8) argues this is particularly the case with senior executives who “are often expected to speak on behalf of a formal organization – even to speak as if they were the organization.” The researcher

then faces the dilemma of only accessing from the interview information already available in the public arena such as press statements or annual reports. My aim, however, was to probe beyond a “public relations account” (Walford, 1994b, p. 226) to determine the dynamics and specifics of the policy process and the personal views and experiences of the participants. In many cases this was achieved when rapport had been built.

An ongoing issue during the interviews was how much of my own knowledge about *LAEP* I should disclose (Adler & Adler, 1987), particularly given that many of the policy elites were used to being deferred to in such a way that their views were regarded as unchallengeable and deserved respect. Depending on the circumstances that presented in the interview, I tended to present myself as being knowledgeable or naive (Ball, 1994b). In some cases, I had to draw on my knowledge of educational policy documents and my research background to deal with the condescending attitude of some of the male participants. For example, they would test my knowledge by asking if I had read various documents and research. Research on elite interviewing recommends that researchers redress the power imbalance by using the same *insider tactic* to demonstrate their knowledge of the topics under discussion (Peabody et al., 1990; Richards, 1996). Fortunately, I was familiar with the documents they identified and was able to discuss them in a way that redressed the intellectual condescension. I also felt, that because I was a middle-aged woman with a professional background in policy practice, I was able to use this experience as leverage when discussing different policies.

When interviewing the policy elites, it was easy to be drawn in by their construction of the issues in relation to *LAEP* as representing the *truth*. Frequently, I found that the male participants would say “of course you would agree that a senior campus is the only way to go in Bunbury.” I saw these attempts at collusion as opportunities for dialogue around contentious issues and to present an alternative perspective in a way that questioned whether they had considered the issues from a different perspective. In this way, I located myself as a local person who was aware of the community concerns about *LAEP* and questioned the basis for assuming that a senior campus was the best option when the public participation process revealed that over 80 percent of participants voted to retain the status quo. I followed up this line of enquiry with questions about participatory policy processes and community empowerment and disempowerment processes.

Throughout the interviews I drew on newspaper reports about the critical events throughout *LAEP*. To explore the critical events I would position myself as an academic and policy researcher who was interested in community participation processes which were highly conflictual. For example, an elite participant, who had responsibility for running some of the committee meetings and recording and distributing minutes, was roundly identified by community representatives as controlling the meetings so that only certain issues were discussed, selectively reporting issues in the minutes and publicly promoting the introduction of a senior campus. All of these issues were raised by me in the interview process and then discussed in relation to the interviewee's view of community engagement and participation processes. At times I took the risk and further questioned whether the elite participant could appreciate that many of the community participants saw these actions as a form of silencing and marginalisation. This line of questioning tended to occur towards the end of the interview process and, in many cases, was welcomed because the elite participants saw these questions as an opportunity to defend their actions and positions because they, too, had felt silenced throughout *LAEP*. In some interviews, this deeper line of probing resulted in respondents articulating how they would have managed the *LAEP* process differently. In some cases this meant a more democratic and participatory process, and, for other elite participants, it meant retaining far greater central control of the enactment process at the local level.

Fitz and Halpin (1994) advise that access to elites is often conditional, and as Duke (2002, p. 47) suggests, researchers need to know "how to play the game." Other researchers have found that communities that participate discuss you and your research (Cookson, 1994; Duke, 2002; Fitz & Halpin, 1994; Ostrander, 1995), which potentially produces ethical dilemmas for the researcher. Consistent with a snowball sampling procedure (Burgess, 1984; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Sarantakos, 1998; Seidman, 1991), I asked respondents to provide the names and contact details of others whom they thought were important for me to interview. This question provided very interesting information on the bureaucratic policy network, particularly in relation to the types and nature of the networks. Some respondents, while being quite derogatory about other members of the policy network, were also particularly interested in knowing who else had participated in the research. When I was asked this question, I initially tried to avoid responding. When this became a feature of interviewing the elite participants, I claimed my status as an academic and a researcher and openly discussed the ethical issues associated with undertaking research of

this nature. I reassured them that providing any information about other participants would be breaking my assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. In many cases, the respondents already knew whom I had interviewed, had discussed my research and its value with them and let me know that they also had a similar view about the *LAEP* process. I interpreted these responses in two ways. First, they were concerned about their position in relation to *LAEP* being validated by other colleagues particularly given the conflictual nature of the process. Second, it was an attempt to appear as though they had some form of control over the information I was collecting throughout the interviews. This line of question by the policy elites also raises the issue as to whether research participants also have responsibilities regarding anonymity and confidentiality.

### ***Turning talk into text***

With the consent of the participants the recorded interviews were transcribed by professional transcribers. To reduce errors and maximise transcription quality, I compared each transcript with the audio-tape to ensure, as much as possible, that what was said on the tape was accurately re/presented in the text. I also saw this process as a way of bringing me much closer to the data (Merriam, 1998).

After comparing the audio-tapes and text, I concluded very quickly that the standard of transcription cast doubt over the trustworthiness of the content of the transcripts as the basis for the data analysis for the research. Tilley and Powick (2002) make the following points about the relationship between the transcription of the interview and its trustworthiness as a data source:

For the most part, transcription continues to be considered a mechanical chore ... The lack of attention paid to the process is related, at least partially, to perceptions that transcription is merely a matter of transferring what was captured on tape to text ... connected to this notion of transference is the assumption that a one-to-one correspondence occurs between the tape and text, that transcribers have captured the reality of the recorded conversation in the transcript ... Such positivist assumptions support the acceptance of transcripts as authoritative texts that hold certain truths, and maintain that the accuracy of transcripts is dictated by the ability of the person transcribing to sustain an objective stance. (p. 292)

While I had given each transcriber directions regarding the format of the transcript, briefed them on the purpose of the study and obtained their confidentiality, I had not been specific enough regarding the detail of the actual transcription of the tapes. This meant

that the transcribers relied on their discretion about what to omit and what to include in the transcription. For example, where parts of the audio-tape were slightly unclear large sections were omitted in the transcript. Words were also inserted into the text that brought a very different meaning to the discussion. One of the transcribers included every *pause* and *um*, and indicated the tone of the participant's voice. Another transcriber tidied up the messiness of the conversation and produced a polished transcript. The punctuation decisions interfered with the flow of conversation and brought different meanings into the text relative to the original conversation.

While acknowledging the interpretive, analytical process that transcription involves, and the challenges inherent in attempting to produce accurate re/presentations of taped conversations (Lapadat, 2000; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999; Tilley, 2003), I re-worked every transcript sometimes listening to the tape up to three or four times. I edited transcript excerpts for purposes of clarity taking care, as much as possible, not to affect participants' intended meanings. Following Tilley and Powick's (2002, p. 294) recommendation for transcribing interviews, I constructed a set of *Transcription Conventions* (see Appendix 4). The transcription conventions provided a basis for the production of transcripts appropriate for research analysis procedures established to uncover themes connected to understanding participants' experiences (Kvale, 1996; O'Connell & Kowal, 1999; Silverman, 1994).

### ***Returning transcripts to participants***

All participants were sent a *Transcript Release Cover Letter* (see Appendix 5) and a *Transcript Release Form* (see Appendix 6) with a copy of their transcripts. The letter invited them to delete, modify or add to the information, and the *Transcript Release Form* requested permission to use the data from the transcript in my thesis. Only two participants did not return a signed *Transcript Release Form*. These participants were sent a *Follow-up Transcript Release Letter* (see Appendix 7) which stated that, unless they responded within a two week period, *no response* was an indicator that I could include the content from their interview in my thesis.

Substantial portions of the returned transcripts contained corrections of grammar as well as requests for the removal of some content. A copy of the amended transcript was returned to each participant with a note urging them to contact me if they had any further concerns. One of the participants contacted me and requested that I show him the sections

from his transcript that I intended to use in the thesis. Four participants contacted me to express their surprise at the nature of the content that they had revealed throughout the interview, and to seek reassurance that the sections they had identified would be deleted. A common response from many of the community participants at the completion of the interview, and following the reading of the transcripts, was that they had not realised how upset and angry they still felt about *LAEP*. Many of the participants described the interview as a cathartic process and said that they realised the importance of a debriefing process following highly conflictual participatory planning processes.

### **Documentary Data Sources**

The literature on policy ethnography stresses the utility of secondary data, including primary records and technical reports (Van Willigen & Dewalt, 1985). Document analysis provides a “behind-the-scenes look at the program that may not be observable and about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without the leads provided through the documents” (Patton, 1990, p. 245).

Secondary sources were generated from a bibliographic search and through key informants from EDWA as well as community representatives. Ball (1994a, p. 21) makes the point that policies need to be understood as both “text” and “discourse” and analysis should focus on “the way in which policy ensembles, collections of related policies exercise power through a *production* of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’, as discourses.” In a similar vein, Taylor et al. (1997) identify how policy analysts can examine texts to uncover assumptions and, drawing on discourse theory, explore how issues are framed in policy documents. Through critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Janks, 1997; Luke, 1996; van Dijk, 2001), I analysed a range of documents to identify the dominant discourses and their assumptions as well as the origins of the assumptions and whose interests are served and whose are absent. Data drawn from the documents was triangulated with interview data to enhance the validity or trustworthiness of this study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). These documents included:

*Major Government and Education Department Policy Documents (Published and Unpublished)*. Major policy documents examined in this study relate to the macro level of the CPTF. For example, the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) was an obvious starting point from which to analyse the discourses surrounding *LAEP* processes and the

roles of state representatives and community representatives. Other documents for examination included: *Better Schools*, (Pearce, 1987), *School Renewal*, (Halden, 1991), *School Rationalisation*, (Education Department of Western Australia, 1994). These documents enabled me to:

- chronicle major policy changes in the area of education reform in Western Australia;
- provide background information on the rationale for education reform in Western Australia from the late 1980s;
- provide background information in the area of events and factors, policy making processes, and the parliamentary and public debates connected to education reform and, specifically, *LAEP*;
- identify the stake-holders and key informants involved in education reform and *LAEP* in Western Australia;
- identify areas for further investigation and validation through an interview process; and
- offer a source of comparison of *LAEP* processes and outcomes in other localities in Western Australia and to provide insights into the values and assumptions underlying these reforms.

*Newspaper Articles.* Newspapers are useful data sources for revealing the chronology of events as well as aspects of the dynamics of the policy process at all levels of the policy trajectory. They are useful for triangulating the chronology and nature of the focusing events which participants identified as significant throughout the agenda-building processes at the middle-range level of CPTF. Furthermore, they identify the individuals and interest groups involved in the focusing events throughout *LAEP*. Newspapers can also provide a far greater critical orientation than policy documents produced by the elite policy makers within state bureaucracies (Gewirtz & Ozga, 1994). As Vidovich (1999b, p. 93) points out they can be “a conduit for voices of resistance from the lower levels of the policy trajectory.” However, like other documents, it is important to be attentive to the way newspaper articles are constructed to convey issues or events to reflect a particular view to readers (May, 1993). Information from newspapers can be used to triangulate the information provided within and between stakeholder groups at the three levels of the policy trajectory.



*Correspondence, Meeting Minutes and Notes, Community Newsletters and Community Documents.* These data sources offered a range of different viewpoints in relation to the rationale for *LAEP*, the policy processes, and the socio-political environment within which *LAEP* evolved. In particular, documentation of the contested positions and nature of strategies of resistance regarding how *LAEP* should proceed is relevant at the middle-range and micro levels of the trajectory. I was also able to access and photocopy minutes, memos, letters and file notes from the *LAEP* files held at the Bunbury District Office of EDWA. The correspondence between the local Bunbury District Office and Head Office provided useful insights into the nature and role of the state in *LAEP* and, in particular, the way in which the *LAEP* process in Bunbury was constructed by state officials as well as the discourse surrounding strategies to deal with the conflictual nature of the process.

*Academic Literature.* Academic literature on education reform within Australia and overseas provided information concerning the current thinking about the impact of globalisation on education reform (L. Angus, 2004; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Lingard, 2000b; Taylor et al., 1997). This information feeds into the three levels of the trajectory and is an important context in which to situate *LAEP* in Western Australia generally and Bunbury specifically.

### ***Creating data collection files***

To manage the large quantity of data collected and produced in this study, I followed the recommendation from Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander (1995) and developed the following data files:

*Transcript File.* This file consists of 25 transcribed interviews.

*LAEP Time-line File.* This retrospective time-line file chronicles the sequence of all the major events that occurred throughout the *LAEP* process in Bunbury. The file was developed from newspaper articles, *LAEP* committee meeting minutes, ministerial press releases, and papers written by parent and community representatives. For example, the dates of all *LAEP* meetings, critical incidents throughout *LAEP*, of meetings in the community about *LAEP* issues and of reports about *LAEP* in the media are documented.

*LAEP Issue File.* From the time-line file I developed an issues file that details the key issues relevant to a particular date. For example, I summarised the key issues from *LAEP*

committee meetings, papers prepared by community representatives, public meetings and newspaper articles. The data in this file was used to triangulate the dates and events and the significance of the events identified by participants.

*Policy Document File.* In this file I traced all the relevant education reform documents for Western Australia from the late-1970s up to the formulation and enactment of *LAEP*. This file contains a time-line of all the relevant major policy documents and key education reform discourses.

*Reflective Journal File.* This file contains all of my reflective notes and insights about conducting the research. For example, after each interview I reflected on my role, how participants may have perceived the way I conducted the interview, and some of the tensions I was experiencing as a critical researcher. In this file I also recorded discussions about my research with my critical partner, my supervisor and my collegiate research group.

*Analytic File.* This file contains the transcripts and the emerging themes from the transcripts. Under each theme I included narratives from the transcripts that reflected the themes. I also made notes about theoretical ideas from the academic literature that connected with the emerging themes. I used this file to question the relevance of theory to practice and vice versa. For example, where participants spoke about how and why they became involved in *LAEP* I noted that I needed to address this at a theoretical level.

## **CRITICAL DATA ANALYSIS**

Carspecken (1991, 1999) observes that, while there has been considerable discussion in the critical ethnography literature about methodological concerns, there is a lack of focus on data analysis procedures. L. Harvey (1990) does, however, distinguish between conventional ethnographic and critical ethnographic data analysis processes. In critical ethnography the data is analysed in recognition of the ideological, political and historical constructedness of social realities. The critical researcher, therefore, endeavours through the analysis to situate the particular focus of the study in its wider social, economic and political realities while also acknowledging that there are multiple truths and realities, and that meaning is something that is socially constructed (Lather, 1991b).

L. Harvey's (1990, p. 20) "dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive" process was used to analyse the data for the study. Rather than the final analysis of the data being derived

exclusively from the ethnographic data, there is a “dialectical interplay” of theory and data (L. Angus, 1986b, p. 72). This data analysis process also offered a way to problematise and to critically reflect on how useful the theoretical concepts informing the CPTF were for understanding *LAEP*. The theoretical constructs were continually modified in light of the participants’ experiences to reveal “counter-interpretations” (Lather, 1986b, p. 267). What occurs, therefore, is a process of theory building rather than making the data fit the theory. L. Harvey (1990) describes the “dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive” (pile building) data analysis process as essentially entailing:

... a constant shuttling backwards and forwards between abstract concept and concrete data; between social totalities and particular phenomena; between current structures and historical development; between surface appearance and essence; between reflection and practice. (p. 29)

The following processes are used to facilitate L. Harvey’s (1990, p. 20) “dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive” (pile building) data analysis process for *LAEP*.

*Vertical reading of data.* I commenced the vertical reading of the interview data and the documents during the fieldwork process. To familiarise myself with the content and to see the data from a number of different perspectives, I read the interview transcripts many times. Transcripts were organised according to stakeholder group: parent, teacher, non-teacher and EDWA administrators from the EDWA District Office or Central Office. The documents were also read numerous times and were initially organised in chronological order so that I could develop a time-line that detailed all the major events that occurred throughout the *LAEP* process in Bunbury. This involved ordering approximately 150 documents.

*Pile building.* This activity began with the deconstruction of raw data through the identification of themes from the transcripts (L. Harvey, 1990). By positioning my study in the tradition of critical social theory and developing a CPTF to interrogate the enactment of *LAEP*, throughout the pile building process I needed to be mindful of Lather’s (1986b) warning about the tensions associated with doing openly ideological research. Lather (1986b) states:

Building empirically grounded theory requires a reciprocal relationship between data and theory. Data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a

priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container into which the data must be poured. (p. 267)

In heeding Lather's (1986b) advice about the potentially deterministic nature of theoretical frameworks and the importance of remaining reflexive in relation to critical social theory and ethnographic methods, I initially used an open thematic data analysis or an "unrestricted coding of the data" (Strauss, 1987, p. 28). This process produced themes that reflected the main ideas in each transcript and across the interview transcripts. From this initial pile building process, a set of *Initial Themes* (see Appendix 8) was formulated which approximated the key themes from the interview data.

Cross-interview analysis was then undertaken to locate and develop the themes from the interviews with ideas and discourses which emerged from the documents. This approach to thematic analysis of the data sources enabled me to focus on the issues that the participants identified in relation to their involvement in *LAEP* without trying to overlay theoretical concepts from the CPTF. The key themes were identified with pencil notes in the margins of each transcript by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which are often meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985, p. 60). This process was repeated many times until I felt that I had reached the point where I was identifying the same set of themes. A set of *Key Themes* (see Appendix 9) was produced. *Key Focusing Events* identified by participants (see Appendix 10) and factual details (for example, dates and locations) were also highlighted on each transcript and then recorded on a separate sheet of paper. Throughout this process of reading and rereading the transcripts for key themes, I continued to deliberately withhold cross referencing the themes with the concepts and levels of analysis in the CPTF.

My supervisor also identified a set of key themes from the transcripts. While the language he used to name the themes was slightly different from mine, overall there was congruence between our sets of themes. Having identified a preliminary set of themes from the interview data, I used a word processor to cut and paste text from each transcript to illustrate each theme. In many cases I found that sections of text from the transcripts could be used to illustrate more than one theme. This was an indication that the themes required further refinement and that sub-themes need to be identified.

*Horizontal reading of themes.* Approaching the reading of the themes from this perspective determines whether there is "internal cohesiveness" and "interrelationships"

between the recurring themes from pile building (L. Harvey, 1990, p. 14). This process of data reconstruction, which relates to interpretation and theoretical conceptualisation, commenced during fieldwork and continued throughout the process of writing up the data chapters. This ongoing dialectical interaction between data collection and analysis aimed to generate analytical concepts to address the research questions for the study.

Horizontal reading of the themes also required identifying the “anomalies and ideological mediations” in the data by seeking “disjunctions between people’s words and actions and inconsistencies in expressed opinions or actions” (L. Harvey, 1990, p. 14). From this process, themes within and across the data were identified as well as contradictory positions or “counter interpretations” (Lather, 1986b, p. 267) of issues and events. These anomalies and ideological mediations provided an insight into the emerging dialectical relationships between social structure and the data collected from fieldwork. From this process I revised the *Key Themes* and from the pile building process and, again using a word processor, cut and pasted excerpts from the transcripts that illustrated the themes as well as the sub-themes. The resulting document was titled *LAEP Themes and Sub-themes* (see Appendix 11).

The value of horizontally reading the themes is that the focus on contradictions, and the way ideology is expressed in participants’ talk about their experiences of *LAEP*, facilitates relating the ethnographic material to wider structural processes and theoretical concepts (L. Harvey, 1990; L. Harvey & MacDonald, 1993). Horizontally reading the themes also enabled me to reflexively move between the macro-micro dialectic that underlies the interrelationship in critical ethnography between macro structural factors that perpetuate oppression, and how they are mediated at the micro level of lived experience of *LAEP* (G. Anderson, 1989; Hammersley, 1992).

By dialectically moving between the themes and the theoretical ideas from the CPTF, a set of *Reconstructed LAEP Themes* (see Appendix 12) was developed which reflected theoretical concerns as well as ethnographic interests. At the same time that I was horizontally rereading the themes, I also investigated the broad social, political and economic factors which influenced education reform in Australia, Western Australia and elsewhere throughout the late-1970s and beyond (see Chapters Four and Five). As L. Harvey (1990) suggests, an “historical investigation of structural changes may often be required to demonstrate how these factors affect the participants of the ethnography.”

*Identifying additional themes.* This process assesses whether additional themes emerge from collapsing or excluding the selection of themes from the pile building and from horizontally reading the themes. While I initially identified two new themes after rereading the *Reconstructed LAEP Themes* developed from the horizontal thematic analysis process, I concluded that they were sub-themes and did not offer greater insights than the previous set of themes. It was at this stage of the data analysis process that I began locating the themes at the different levels of the policy trajectory framework.

In writing up the data chapter for this thesis I have drawn on participants' narratives to illustrate the identified themes (L. Harvey, 1990). Throughout this process I continually moved between theory and data and vice versa making refinements to the themes and assessing the relevance and importance of the sub-themes when describing participants' experiences of *LAEP*. I often found that I was able to collapse many of the sub-themes when representing an idea in the text of the thesis. I also found, that while a deeper understanding of the themes could be obtained by drawing on the theoretical concepts from the CPTF, to locate some themes within a theoretical context I had to search other bodies of literature.

## **ESTABLISHING TRUSTWORTHINESS OF RESEARCH**

Questions of validity and objectivity have prompted critical ethnographers to clarify their approach to the roles of the researcher, the researched, and of theory in the process of inquiry (G. Anderson, 1989; Carspecken & MacGillivray, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1986a, 1986b). The notion of validity takes on different meanings depending on the research paradigm within which a particular piece of research is located. For the *LAEP* study, I initially draw on Lincoln and Guba's (1985, pp. 218-219) understanding of validity as it applies to qualitative research by demonstrating the "trustworthiness" of the research through formulating an audit trail of the research process. I also incorporate Lather's (1986a) construction of validity in relation to critical ethnography. While the term validity has positivist overtones, Lather (1993, p. 674) retains it "in order to both circulate and break with the signs that code it." This, she argues, requires moving beyond the decision/audit trail to critically analyse the socially constructed nature of research practice.

Lather's (1986b) approach to demonstrating the validity of critical social research is premised on self-reflexivity through reformulations of triangulation, construct validity,

face validity and catalytic validity. From this perspective, validity can be understood as the process of reflexively moving between the participants' stories and associated themes, and a process of broader social structural and historical analysis. As D. Wainwright (1997) says, the value of this approach is that while:

This is an uneasy and in some senses contradictory combination that requires careful management at each stage of the research process ... it does provide an opportunity to get beneath the surface of everyday appearances, to produce theoretically informed accounts of social phenomena that are grounded in people's experience of everyday life, but which take a critical approach to the categories and forms through which everyday life is experienced. (n.p.)

### **Developing an Audit Trail**

To address the issues of trustworthiness, credibility and subjectivity, I developed an audit trail which comprises a series of data or analytic files (see page pp. 78-79). The analytic files for this study contain raw data, such as interview tapes, transcripts and written field notes; data reduction and analysis products, such as field notes and theoretical memos; and data reconstruction and synthesis documents as well as integrative diagrams to connect themes. These analytic files also contain notes of ethical issues, and of decision-making while in the field and throughout the data analysis and writing up process. Copies of notes from supervision sessions where decisions were made about methodological issues and discussions about the relationship between theory and data are also recorded. Diagrams illustrating how I moved back and forward between raw data, themes and theoretical concepts provide insights into the way I applied L. Harvey's (1990, p. 20) "dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive" data analysis process to produce the main themes that inform the data analysis chapters of this thesis.

### **Triangulating Data Sources**

Triangulation is a common approach used in qualitative methodological approaches to enhance the reliability and validity of the research. Various types of triangulation have been emphasised depending on whether it is achieved through multiple methods, sources, researchers, theories and or data types (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). Lather (1986a, p. 67) argues that triangulation must go beyond the "psychometric definition of multiple measures to include multiple *data sources*, *methods* and *theoretical schemes* ... [to] seek counterpatterns as well as convergences if data are to be credible." This is seen

as a guard against researcher biases distorting the logic of evidence within “openly ideological” research (Lather, 1986a, p. 63). This entails cross-checking the data (Batteson & Ball, 1995; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) by combining different views of the same event or issue to provide a more comprehensive picture (Tritter, 1995). This technique of triangulation is particularly appropriate for a critical ethnography which seeks to respond to the multiplicity of perspectives present in a highly complex and contested policy process such as *LAEP* (Cohen & Manion, 1989). The combination of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and the close analysis of relevant documents was used to check the timing and content of the focusing events throughout *LAEP* that were identified by participants (see Chapter Eight). Triangulation was also possible between different levels of the trajectory when similar interview topics were covered. The aim, however, was not to present a single coherent picture, but to illuminate participants’ competing views and interpretations of events.

Searching for negative or disconfirming cases (Glesne, 1999, p. 32) was one way of improving the credibility of the research because it challenged the emerging theoretical propositions. This technique involved pursuing examples that appeared not to fit the evolving story line and the theories that I was drawing on to explain participants’ roles, ideological positioning and actions. Purposive sampling became increasingly useful as I sought research participants who could add alternative perspectives “to fill the gaps in the theoretical formulation” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 141). In this way, I actively sought more participants from the EDWA bureaucracy to challenge my local perspective in relation to *LAEP*. Different perceptions of the same aspect of the *LAEP* process, particularly decision-making processes and events and issues at committee meetings, were triangulated to determine consistent, contested or contradictory perceptions (see Chapter Eight). Triangulation of these data sources also challenged my values and reflected differences in the way participants constructed their roles and understanding of *LAEP*. For example, a number of the EDWA administrators, while primarily advocating education reform from an economic rationalist and neo-liberal perspective, also spoke about the importance of addressing issues of class and race in relation to education restructuring.



## Face Validity

Establishing face validity, according to Lather (1986a), demonstrates the credibility of the research data and findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) refer to this as “member checks” which they consider are the backbone of satisfying the “truth value” (p. 294) criterion in qualitative research. Garman (1994, p. 7) talks about establishing “verisimilitude” in qualitative research. This approach questions whether the research represents “human experiences with sufficient detail so that the portrayal can be recognisable as ‘truly conceivable experience’” (p. 7).

Part of the process of establishing “face validity” (Lather, 1986a, p. 67) rests on the notion of reciprocity between the researcher and the participants. As a form of social practice, critical ethnography seeks ways of involving “the people under study some control over the research process, yielding a more democratic form of knowledge production” (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, p. 531). This notion of reciprocity was built into the research design for *LAEP* as a way to develop an empowering dialogue between participants and me. I had ongoing dialogue with a number of participants about the various ways they wished to engage in the process, their issues about representation, and their expectations arising from the research and how the research could be mutually beneficial. I also sought to develop some form of reciprocal relationship with participants by taking materials such as transcripts, data analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions back to participants who had expressed an interest in being involved in the research at this level (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). While only a very small number of participants responded to the offer to review the research process, when opportunities presented to informally discuss the research, I encouraged participants to challenge my evolving understandings. From these processes I adjusted some of the sub-themes and tried to represent contested positions across and within stakeholder groups more clearly.

Lather (1986b, p. 271) says that “face validity” has been established if participants provide a “yes of course” response rather than a “yes but” response to the research findings. Most participants ultimately concluded that the findings were credible and resonated with their understanding and experiences of *LAEP*. Two participants, however, resisted the notion of representing contested positions in relation to the events at *LAEP* committee meetings. In other words, they felt that there existed a particular *truth* about the way *LAEP* unfolded. This positioning from participants led me to question Lather’s (1986b, p. 271) approach to establishing “face validity” particularly in policy research

such as *LAEP*, where the issues are highly contested because of differing ideological positions in relation to power, control and ownership of decision-making.

While the way I represented contested positions in relation to particular events throughout *LAEP* was questioned by a small number of participants, many of the participants stated that the portrayal of the interaction of structural forces and human agency within the local context was important. All of the participants expressed that locating the emergence of *LAEP* within the major policy and ideological shifts that have impacted on education reform in Western Australia was very significant. Some of the EDWA participants identified how these shifts have constrained their work and the nature of education policy reform in Western Australia. A number of the community participants also identified how these ideological shifts constrained the nature of participatory practices at the local level.

### **Construct Validity**

Lather (1986a, p. 67) talks about the need to establish “construct validity” in a way that recognises its “roots in theory construction.” This requires ongoing reflexivity between critical social theory and ethnographic methods so that there is interaction between theoretical constructs and observations of lived experiences of participants throughout the fieldwork process (Hammersley, 1992). To address “construct validity”, Lather (1986a, p. 67) contends that the theory and data need to be interactive rather than theory merely overlaid on the data. To incorporate content validity in the research design, I chose L. Harvey’s (1990, p. 20) “dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive” data analysis process because it specifically aims to develop a dialectical relationship between critical social research theories and the lived experiences of participants. I constantly compared the theoretical perspectives from the CPTF with the data to ensure that the data had influenced original theories and vice versa. Lather (1986a, p. 67) also suggests that there is a need to show how “‘*a priori*’ theory is changed by the logic of the data.” In the case of *LAEP*, modifications were made to the CPTF because of the themes that emerged from the data. For example, in Chapters Six and Eight, the idea of *LAEP* as an “invited” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) policy space and the power effects was developed from the participants’ discussions about participating in *LAEP*. Further theoretical development occurred in relation to how participants developed strategies and counter discourses to

shift *LAEP* from an invited policy to a “claimed/created” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27) policy space.

### **Catalytic Validity**

Undertaking openly ideological research requires establishing “catalytic validity” (Lather, 1986b, p. 272). Catalytic validity “represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it” (Lather, 1986b, p. 272). In other words, according to G. Anderson, Herr and Nihlen (2007, p. 42), catalytic validity has been achieved if respondents further self-understanding and, ideally, self-determination has been achieved from participating in the research and there is a deepening of understanding of the issues studied. This requires making some assessment of how well the research undertaking contributes to social change (Lather, 1986a, 1986b). The purpose of the present study was not to make generalisations but to explore the complexities of the case and to present them in enough “detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience ... and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (Seidman, 1991, p. 41). Through the exploration of participants’ experiences of participatory educational change processes, this study intends to contribute by documenting a process about educational change which highlights how issues of structure and agency both constrain and enable participatory processes (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

### **Limitations of the Study**

Like Glesne (1999, p. 152) says, part of establishing the trustworthiness or the validity of a study is to openly declare its limitations. I cannot claim to have represented all of the voices or stakeholder groups who had an interest in *LAEP*. Apart from the Central Office EDWA administrators and the local politicians, only those who formally participated in the *LAEP* drafting and consultative committees were interviewed. While I have attempted to triangulate information from the interviews with other data sources, the study could have offered a wider range of views and experiences if the scope had been widened to include other voices from schools and the community. These wider voices may have challenged some of my interpretations of the interview data and other community and parent representatives’ constructions of *LAEP*.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

My view of ethical research is constrained by broader social-historical relations. As Flinders (1992) notes:

Regardless of our individual actions or intentions ... the researcher-participant relationship is largely defined (long before we begin the study) by our respective roles, status differences, cultural norms, and the very language that makes communication possible in the first place ... To put this another way, we can hardly approach our work as if it was a blank canvas. (p. 110)

As previously discussed, the participants did not represent a homogeneous group. I interviewed peers at both a personal and professional level, as well as participants in the category of “researching up” (Walford, 1994a, p. 2). While many of the participants were articulate, educated professionals, I could not presume that these policy actors were impervious to misrepresentation within and beyond the research process. Taking these issues into consideration, my ethical concern and regard for participants entailed a moral commitment to ongoing dialogue with all willing participants about the research processes and issues of representation. In particular, engaging in ongoing dialogue about the research process “honours the trust on which the researcher’s access to information is predicated and out of which develops a sense of collaborative labour” (Flinders, 1992, p. 107). Negotiating access involves more than informing potential interviewees about the research and gaining their consent. Significantly, extending an invitation to participate and collaborate involves genuine dialogue and the retention of an open and transparent agenda. As stated previously, participants were given the opportunity to review and adjust their transcripts, to determine what information is confidential, to withdraw from the study at any point and to participate in the data analysis process by receiving feedback throughout the development of the research and/or seeing the final report, receiving a summary, or through personal contact with the researcher.

### **Non-exploitation: Confidentiality and Non-Identifiability**

Consideration of the context in which the research is conducted is significant in relation to issues of confidentiality and anonymity. This research was conducted in a regional community where I needed to be vigilant in my attempts to maintain confidentiality and anonymity because of the level of familiarity between many of the respondents. Due to the nature of the snowball sampling procedure, there existed the potential for participants

to be identified through the process of identifying other relevant stakeholders. As a way of retaining participant anonymity, no indication was given as to whether those identified, as potential participants were approached for an interview or how stakeholders approached for an interview were selected. Transcripts and audio-tapes were stored in a locked cabinet. To protect against exploitation, I maintained confidentiality and established the rights of participants to validate all interview data. Audio-tapes were deleted when all of the interviews had been transcribed and the transcripts returned to participants for approval, modification, amendment or deletion.

To ensure confidentiality, all participants were given pseudonyms which were used on all computer files, documents and printed material. To further ensure anonymity I have used numerous titles when referring to a participant in the text. While a participant's actual role is not altered, the same participant may be referred to as an administrator, non-teacher or school administrator throughout the text.

Anonymity is difficult to maintain when research is undertaken in a community where many of the participants know each other professionally and socially. Also, because the local media reports about *LAEP* named and quoted participants, this makes anonymity difficult to sustain. While a number of participants wanted their contribution to the content of this research identifiable in the public arena, I chose however, to make all participants non-identifiable because of the potential for other participants to be identified by association.

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have argued the value of a critical ethnographic methodology to investigate how participants understood, experienced and responded to the enactment of *LAEP* from 1998-2000 in Bunbury, Western Australia. Critical ethnography meets the dual requirement for this study in that, while it is a form of ethnographic, postpositivist qualitative inquiry that describes participants' experiences of *LAEP*, it also reflects the openly ideological nature of this research by drawing on theoretical constructs from critical social theory to analyse participants' experiences of *LAEP*. As a form of qualitative enquiry, it accommodates a policy process that is complex and multi-layered and reflects the multiple truths and realities that comprise participants' lived experiences of participating in *LAEP*. The critical theoretical orientation of the methodology is compatible with the socially critical theoretical assumptions informing the CPTF and the

data collection methods used (in-depth interviews and primary and secondary document) generated data at the macro, middle-range and micro levels of the CPTF to locate participants' experiences of *LAEP* in broader socio-political, socio-economic and historical contexts to show how social structure, ideology and power potentially shaped those experiences.

Participants were identified through a combination of purposive (Alston & Bowles, 1998) and snowball (Burgess, 1984) sampling processes. These processes generated participants from the macro level EDWA Head Office, middle-range EDWA District Office, and the micro level of community and school representatives reflective of the three levels of the CPTF. The adoption of L. Harvey's (1990, p. 20) "dialectical deconstructive-reconstructive" offered a series of processes to oscillate between theory and data to produce a set of themes that reflect the dialectical relationship between human agency and social structures as they related to *LAEP*. An important part of the data analysis process was to ensure that, rather than making the data fit the different theories and concepts at the three levels of the CPTF, I sought "counter-interpretations" (Lather, 1986b, p. 267) of the relationship between the theory and data that offered different readings of the data and highlighted the limitations and omissions of the CPTF for explaining aspects of the data. This required me to seek theoretical explanations of the data beyond the ideas and concepts contained in the CPTF (see Chapters Six, Seven and Eight).

To establish the trustworthiness of the research I developed an audit trail of the research process through developing a series of data files. The data sources were triangulated both within and between the three levels of the CPTF to increase the trustworthiness of the research findings which are detailed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. I also sought to establish the trustworthiness of the research by demonstrating Lather's (1986a) reformulations of construct validity, face validity and catalytic validity as they apply to critical social research and, in particular, *LAEP*.

Because critical ethnography is postpositivist, qualitative and socially critical, it requires a critically reflexive view of the political nature of fieldwork, knowledge construction and participant representation. I addressed these methodological concerns through the creation of spaces for mutual dialogue and the involvement of participants in the process of knowledge construction. In this chapter I also described how I addressed some of the

political issues I encountered during interviews with policy elites at the macro level of the CPTF. The interviews with policy elites made me question what it meant to be a critical researcher in the moment, how to address feelings of disempowerment and how not to collude with participants' constructions of the *truth* in relation to *LAEP*.

The principal ethical consideration for this study was to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. In this chapter I detailed how I sought to address issues of non-exploitation, confidentiality and non-identifiability of participants in this study. While every effort was made throughout the research to honour these commitments, enduring issues remain as to how to ensure non-identifiability of participants when undertaking research in a regional community where participants were connected through personal and professional relationships and networks.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **TRAVELLING POLICIES AND EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I apply a macro policy analysis perspective to explore why education restructuring and in particular, the discourses of devolution and community participation have moved to a central place on the contemporary education policy agenda at a global and nation-state level over the past two decades. In so doing, I am interested in the idea of devolution and community participation as “travelling” policies (Dehli, 2004, p. 46) and how the macro structural factors and influences that form part of the broad policy environment have motivated nation-states of most western countries to restructure public education systems.

This policy manoeuvre of devolution and community participation was adopted by most western capitalist nations, including Australia to restructure their education systems in the late-1980s and throughout the 1990s (Blackmore, 1997; Knight et al., 1993; Sayed, 1997; K. Watson, 2000; Whitty & Power, 1999; Whitty et al., 1998). Cross national comparisons also highlight that the devolution of education systems and community participation policies are prevalent among developing nations such as Latin America, South Asia and Eastern European (Astiz, Wiseman, & Baker, 2002; Schiefelbein, 2004; K. Watson, 2000; Weiler, 1990). Countries in the Pacific Rim, such as Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, also are experimenting with dismantling centralist education systems (Cheng & Chan, 2000; Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004; K. Mok, 2000). In the case of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), devolution and community participation are also identified as key strategies to facilitate the restructuring of the Western Australian public education system.

By devolution policies, I refer to attempts to shift power and authority over financial affairs and decision-making from centrally organised bureaucratic departments to local sites. In an educational system, this means that authority is transferred to school districts or individual schools by changing the regulations concerning the operation of the system (Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004, p. 290). As Barcan (1990, p. 170) explains,



“devolution aims to give state schools more autonomy and responsibility, but with greater community input, by increasing the power of principals or of school councils.” Devolution is portrayed as a mechanism to empower local agents to have more control over the educational agendas of their schools.

This chapter comprises two sections. The first section commences with a discussion of devolution and community participation as “travelling” policies (Dehli, 2004, p. 46) and the limitations of pre-globalisation explanations of the emergence of similar educational restructuring policies within and between nations from the late-1980s. Following this, I introduce the notion that educational policy convergence needs to be located within the context of globalisation, and examine how the global economic crisis of the 1970s, economic and political globalisation processes and the associated emergence of neo-liberal ideology, provide an important broader context within which to locate similar pressures confronting nation-states to reconfigure their form, role and the provision of public education. The second section addresses how the purpose and provision of public education has been reconfigured across western nations in line with elements of a “new global educational policy consensus” (Lingard, 2000b, 84) and the role of transnational organisations in formulating and institutionalising the educational policy consensus. I also discuss how many of the ideas which constitute the new global educational policy consensus are reflected in successive Australian Federal Governments’ educational policies from the late-1970s onwards. Finally, I address the restructuring of the education state within a corporate managerialist framework and the implications of this framework for education policy production and enactment.

To assist me to investigate why educational restructuring and policies of devolution and community participation have been pursued by most western nations from the 1980s onwards, I draw on the following macro and middle-range theoretical ideas from the CPTF.

At the macro structural level these ideas include:

- the role of the state, and the education restructuring policies pursued by nation-states, have been shaped by political and economic globalisation as part of the broad environmental context;
- discourses of devolution and community participation are formed, shaped and mediated at the global and national levels; and

- policy discourses of devolution and community participation are historically produced, interpreted and [re]constructed by particular interest groups.

At the middle-range level the theoretical ideas include:

- the agenda-building strategies used by transnational organisations to facilitate and legitimate education restructuring and the policy discourses of devolution and community participation; and
- the policy discourses of devolution and community participation are employed to legitimate particular forms of conduct and participation while marginalising others.

As a way forward I commence with a discussion about devolution and community participation as travelling policies and the limitations of pre-globalisation explanations.

## **GLOBALISATION, NEO-LIBERALISM AND EDUCATIONAL RESTRUCTURING**

Since the late-1980s many of the education policy documents and debates emanating from various national and state governments of western countries contain strikingly similar discourses about the justifications for and nature of reforms required to improve public education systems (Blackmore, 1993; Dehli, 2004; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). In countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Great Britain and the United States of America, decentralisation is promoted as a solution to several common crises in public education systems. These crises include the cost of state education, the lack of flexibility in educational bureaucracies, the monopolies of (self-interested) education professionals and the poor standards of education (Dehli, 2004; Smyth, 2001; Whitty et al., 1998). While many of the constructions of public education as problematic and the promises of decentralisation policies have been challenged and contradicted by education researchers and commentators, such ideas have “truth-effects” (Foucault cited in Dehli, 2004, p. 51) and are “both resilient and mobile” (p. 61). These ideas have travelled so well that decentralisation policies are often cited as one of the policy “epidemics” of the 1990s (Levin, 1998, p. 131). As a consequence, there is an increasing body of literature which discusses the intensified cross-national travel and convergence of educational policy ideas, of devolution and decentralisation (Bush & Gamage, 2001; Dale, 1999a; Dehli, 2004; Green, 1999; Halpin & Troyna, 1995; Law, 2004; Levin, 1997; Whitty & Power, 1999).

Common explanations of the emergence of similar restructuring initiatives within and between nation-states include ideas of “policy learning” and “policy borrowing” (Dale, 1999a, p. 5), “migrating policy metaphors” (Edwards, Nicoll, & Tait, 1999, p. 619), “travelling” policies (Dehli, 2004, p. 46) and “policy epidemics” (Levin, 1998, p. 131). These approaches suggest that the dissemination of ideas internationally can be understood through the circulation of social and political networks (Popkewitz, 1996), which as Ball (1998a, p. 124) explains, includes the activities of “various ‘policy entrepreneurs, groups and individuals who ‘sell’ their solutions to the academic and political market-place.” Ideas such as devolution and parental participation in school decision-making are, therefore, all current examples of “such entrepreneurship which takes place through academic channels ... and via the performances of charismatic “travelling academics” and educators (p. 124). These ideas are also often promoted as generic solutions without due regard for their cultural appropriateness or their implications for social inequities within and between school communities (Dehli, 2004).

Comparisons between mechanisms of policy convergence across national education systems suggest that traditional mechanisms of policy influence, such as “policy borrowing” and “policy learning”, tend to be carried out “*voluntarily*” and primarily involve one country seeking to “*imitate, emulate, or copy, bilaterally*” a particular policy from another country (Dale, 1999a, p. 9). These mechanisms of policy transfer are often the result of “*conscious decision making*”, and are “*initiated*” by the “*recipient*” country (Dale, 1999a, p. 10). While these approaches to policy transfer offer some level of insight as to how policies such as devolution and community participation in educational decision-making circulate between nations, these ideas are grounded in a pre-globalisation account of the relationship between nations and provide only a partial explanation (Lingard, 2000b; Ozga & Jones, 2006; Vidovich, 2006).

### **Globalisation and Educational Policy Convergence**

Since the mid-1990s, many educational commentators have contended that it is increasingly difficult to understand education policy convergence between nations without reference to economic and political globalisation processes (Ball, 1998a; Carnoy, 2000; P. Jones, 1998; Lingard, 2000b; McGinn, 1997; K. Mok & Currie, 2002; Taylor & Henry, 2000; Vidovich, 2001, 2006). In contrast to the more traditional mechanisms of policy influence, such as policy borrowing, globalisation introduces influences and

factors that are external to national education systems which require a paradigm shift in the type of policy responses adopted by governments (Dale, 1999a, pp. 9-10). While acknowledging that the opportunity for traditional policy transfer processes (e.g. policy borrowing and policy learning) between countries has become markedly easier because of the “various flows of globalization”, Lingard (2000b, p. 91) contends that the “emergent post-national relationships” within the educational policy field and the role of multilateral agencies in shaping global policy debates and agendas need to be taken into account in contemporary discussions of education policy convergence between nations. Many international comparative researchers also identify devolution as one of the key features of “competitiveness-driven reforms” (Carnoy, 1999, pp. 37-39) and highlight the international pressure on governments to decentralise the education sector (L. Angus, 2004; Astiz et al., 2002; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Henry et al., 2001; McGinn, 1997; McNeely & Cha, 1994). According to Blackmore (2000 p. 473), the meta-narrative of globalisation has been drawn on as a justification to radically reform state education systems in nation-states as “disparate” as Australia, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Netherlands, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Norway and South Africa. A common theme in the policy texts is the need for far-reaching educational restructuring by downsizing and decentralising educational bureaucracies along the lines of devolution, site-based management and self-governing schools.

The origins of globalisation, and whether this contemporary form of globalisation is a new phenomenon that has brought a new set of factors and pressures that shape and constrain the education policy options of nation-states, as discussed in Chapter Two, is the subject of much debate (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Daun, 2002; Hirst & Thompson, 1996; Medina, 2003; R. Robertson, 1992; Waters, 1995). Characteristic of this contemporary form of globalisation are the new players and “engines” driving the process which include “transnational corporations (TNCs), transnational media organisations (TMOs), intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and alternative government organisations (AGOs)” (Tehranaian cited in Riggs, 1998, n.p.). While the processes of globalisation may not be new, as Currie (2003, p. 474) argues, the world is now “integrated economically in a way that is different from the past,” due to the scale and depth of globalisation and the effects on nation-states. Of relevance here is that it would appear that national boundaries are more porous to the

extent that local events, issues and policies are shaped by macro contexts far removed from local environments (Burbules & Torres, 2000)

While we have witnessed the emergence of “global flows of educational ideas” (Henry et al., 2001, p. 3) around issues of educational restructuring, what is not clear is why and how the discourses of devolution and community participation have circulated at a global level and have been drawn on by most nation-states to restructure public education systems since the late-1980s. To address this issue requires the illumination of the material and discursive conditions that operate globally to make these policy changes possible and for them to be viewed as necessary at the nation-state level. A key feature of globalisation is that while it has a “material base in capitalism”, it also has a discursive dimension which is generally associated with the expansion of neo-liberal ideology and practices (Currie, 2003, p. 476). That is, while globalisation in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is linked to a market ideology, which is informed by neo-liberal ideology and discourses, it is also a material set of practices, oriented toward flexible production processes which facilitate the free flow of capital globally (Dudley, 1998; Edwards & Usher, 2000; Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). This form of economic globalisation is often referred to as “fast capitalism”, “capitalist globalization”, and “neoliberal globalization” (Currie, 2003, p. 475).

To understand why western countries have drawn on the discourses of devolution and community participation as central policy platforms for education restructuring requires an exploration of how the material and discursive effects of this economic and political globalisation have shaped the economic and social policy options of nation-states. To explore these macro policy analysis issues, I now discuss the relationship between economic crisis, economic globalisation, the restructuring of national economies, industries and the Keynesian welfare state. Reflective of a socially critical macro policy analysis approach, I take an historical perspective to address:

- the world-wide economic crisis of the 1970s and the intensification of economic globalisation;
- the shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist mode of capital accumulation; and
- the challenges from advocates of neo-liberalism to roll back and reconfigure the Keynesian welfare state.

Combined, these factors offer a broad policy environmental context in which to locate the factors and pressures confronting western nations to pursue public education restructuring policies throughout the 1980s and beyond.

### **Global Economic Crisis and the Intensification of Economic Globalisation**

For most advanced liberal democracies, the period between 1945 and the 1970s was economically stable and prosperous and was characterised as the long boom or the Keynesian/Fordist settlement between capital and labour, and as the period of mass production and mass consumption. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Keynesian economic theories were the official policy discourse for the management of western nations' economies. A central feature of this philosophy is to reinterpret the role of government away from *laissez-faire* economic doctrines and to emphasise a greater role for the state in fiscal rather than monetary policy, and a greater role for economic management rather than the dominance of market forces (Olssen et al., 2004). Keynesianism, as a form of macro-economic fiscal policy, meant that governments actively intervened in the economy to assist its regulation and to assure the provision of public goods which the market did not provide or provided inadequately. The economic and social priority was full employment and the objectives of public policy were, broadly, to ensure “the general maximization of welfare within a national society” (Cerny, 1990, p. 205).

The long post-war boom in industrialised countries through to the early-1970s provided conditions for major increases in public spending on education and other social programmes (Down, 1997; Marginson, 1997a, 1997c; Olssen et al., 2004; Spaul, 1998). As Rizvi and Lingard (1997, p. xvii) note, while Keynesianism was an economic theory, it also held a strong “moral position” that governments were responsible for managing markets and facilitating economic growth at the same time as they took responsibility to reduce the effects of social inequalities. To this end, a robust public sector was seen as necessary to minimise social and economic inequities. Within this broad context, the application of Keynesianism also meant regulating the financial sector as well as tariffs so that local industries were promoted and domestic markets sustained (Rizvi & Lingard, 1997, p. xviii).

Commencing in the 1970s with the world-wide economic recession, the Keynesian/Fordist compromise began unravelling, marking the onset of radical restructuring of western economies in countries as diverse as the United States of

America, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand (Barns et al., 1999; Hirst & Thompson, 1996; Marginson, 1997a). The collapse of the Bretton Woods Agreement, and the oil crisis of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (hereafter OPEC), which caused a rise in the price of oil, produced long-lasting economic instability in all of the major economies (Barns et al., 1999; Dudley, 1998; D. Harvey, 1989). This instability continued well into the 1980s and was further compounded by factors such as:

- the internationalisation of financial markets by the widespread abandonment of exchange rate controls;
- slowing economic growth rates;
- a move toward deindustrialisation in Europe and the United States of America;
- the emergence of newly industrialised countries, such as Asia, and their movement into developed countries' markets;
- pressures for free trade and market deregulation; and
- the move from standardised mass production to new post-Fordist flexible, production methods (Dudley, 1998; Hirst & Thompson, 1996).

By the 1980s, overseas borrowing in most western economies had reached unsustainable levels and governments intervened in the economy with a freeze on wages and prices. The declining terms of trade and precarious location of nations in the global economy were also contributing factors to the emerging fiscal crisis (Olssen et al., 2004). Western nations also experienced high levels of inflation, a substantial increase in long-term unemployment, a downturn in the productive sector and an increasing lack of access to growing amounts of profits, which were taken out of the control of national governments and reinvested through substantially tax free off-shore investment schemes. In most western liberal-capitalist states, these factors produced problems for governments to sustain capital accumulation (Soucek, 1994). In the late 1980s, the collapse of communist state regimes in Eastern Europe and then the USSR, and the extension of capitalist market relationships, changed international relations by opening up additional trading markets on a global scale (Stilwell, 1994). During the 1980s and 1990s a combination of the aforementioned internal domestic problems in western industrialised countries, as well as external pressures outlined above, has seen new international economic and trading relations emerge which have radically changed the way nations manage their national economies over the past two decades (Dudley, 1998).

Since the 1970s, advanced capitalist nations have endeavoured to restructure their economies to deal with the word-wide economic crisis (Jessop, 1999; S. Robertson, Bonal, & Dale, 2002). The changing world economy in the 1970s, and the preoccupation of governments with rising inflation rates and high levels of sustained unemployment, paved the way for the discrediting of Keynesianism when it offered no answer to stagflation (a simultaneous increase in inflation and unemployment). These worsening economic and social conditions facilitated the spread of New Right ideologies particularly by opponents of Keynesianism who tried to discredit the post-war interventionists' policies which had justified the welfare state and substantial government intervention in the economy (Brown & Lauder, 1996; Marginson, 1997a).

By the 1980s, Milton Freidman's and Adam Smith's monetarist theories were elevated to an international discourse and were increasingly, implemented by western governments because they appeared to offer a solution to the accumulation crisis for western liberal-capitalist states (Marginson, 1993; Olssen et al., 2004; Webster, 1995). Freidman's monetarist theories assume that the accumulation process is self-regulating and that the state should not intervene in the free-market. These theories oppose government ownership of business enterprises and advocate free trade within and between nations to promote a competitive environment (Marginson, 1997a; Olssen et al., 2004). Freidman also maintains that market forces, rather than increased government intervention, could most effectively produce a balanced and non-inflationary rate of economic growth (G. Bell & McConnel, 1991; Webster, 1995).

The break-down of the Bretton Woods Agreement and the abandonment of Keynesian macro-economic policy also contributed to a turn towards free-market policies and monetarist theories. Furthermore, the belief in the effectiveness of government intervention was further undermined by macro-economic failures, and, throughout the 1980s, support for free-market policies continued to grow (Marginson, 1997a). Consistent with monetarist theories, most western governments throughout the 1980s were increasingly committed to opening up the world economy (Dudley, 1998; Gray & Lawrence, 2001; Olssen et al., 2004). This shift by national governments to free-market and free capital ideologies saw post-Fordist modes of capital accumulation adopted by industry. Throughout the 1980s, the ideas of post-Fordism travelled from industrial spaces into educational spaces (Brown & Lauder, 1996; S. Robertson, 1993; Smyth, 2001) bringing with them major challenges to the structure and functions of the



Keynesian/Fordist welfare state and the liberal democratic settlement in relation to public education. These issues are elaborated on below.

***Re-working capital accumulation processes: Fordism to post-Fordism***

Olssen et al. (2004, p. 132) assert that the economic crisis of the 1970s had “economic and political ramifications” which “laid the ideological foundation for massive change in the nature of the entire social formation as well as the nature of accumulation processes.” This is often characterised as a shift from Fordism to post-Fordism, which underpinned changes to the labour process and social institutions. As discussed further on in this chapter, the shift to a post-Fordist capitalist accumulation process also brought major challenges to the very purpose, structure and provision of public education in most western countries throughout the 1980s and beyond (Brown & Lauder, 1996; Knight et al., 1993; S. Robertson, 1993; Smyth et al., 2000; Soucek, 1994).

A key element of the globalisation discourse is the notion that what occurred from the late-1970s onwards within global capitalism was a major breakdown in the dominant industrial mode based upon processes of mass production. The shift, or partial shift, from standardised mass production (Fordism) to flexible specialisation (post-Fordism) has been a key feature (Broomhill, 1995, pp. 28-29). Fordism began to falter in the 1970s following falling productivity growth, international competition and sustained upward pressures on direct and social wages. Fordism incorporated many of the programmes and technologies of expansive liberal governance, relied on state intervention in the economy to ensure stabilised mass markets, accepted the need for the social wage and looked to the regulation of international markets (Castells, 1991; P. Harris, 1999; Probert, 1994). Soucek (1994, pp. 44-45) suggests that the 1970s economic crisis can be viewed as a “conjunctural crisis ... [whereby] ... the rigidity of Fordism is no longer able to contain the inherent contradictions of capitalism.” In other words, the rigidity of monopolised mass-production systems, labour markets, labour allocation and, at the same time, entitlement programs such as the social wage placed pressure on the state without the state being in a position to expand the fiscal basis for its programs. The resolution of this crisis has resulted in a re-working of the Fordist accumulation strategy and the Keynesian welfare state (which have constituted a broader social framework for most western nations) through a re-articulation of a new accumulation strategy described as

post-Fordism and a post-welfare reconfigured state (J. Harris & McDonald, 2000; Soucek, 1994).

The post-Fordist model of accumulation is based on an industrial rationality which emphasises flexible production, niche markets, multi-skilling and enterprise bargaining arrangements for workers (P. Harris, 1999). Post-Fordism, therefore, is a “high skill/high wage route to national prosperity” through the introduction of innovative production processes and market flexibility and through the multi-skilling of workers (Barns et al., 1999, p. 14). The post-Fordist approach identifies new modes of regulation within modern capitalism and, as S. Roberston (1993) explains, one of the components is characterised by:

... changes in the nature of production and consumption, where mass production is seen as the bench mark of the past. Technological developments, based upon microchip, offer the possibility of reducing ‘break-even points’, where small and medium batch production (for niche markets) can be more viable in what were mass production industries ... flexible work teams can be drawn together from a core and peripheral labour force attached to the organization, in an environment where there is a fusing of managerial and operational duties. (p. 121)

This new economy and the associated nature of production, a shift from a Fordist to a post-Fordist mode of flexible production (Dudley, 1998, p. 26), is now seen to be controlled by multinational companies and TNCs that dominate world production and trade activities and are the vehicles through which most of the changes that define globalisation are transmitted across the globe (Broomhill, 1995, p. 27). Most importantly, their investment decisions are motivated by efficiency and profit factors rather than by national allegiances or requirements (Broomhill, 1995; Dudley, 1998). As Brown and Lauder (1996, pp. 2-3) put it, globalisation consists of a “*global auction* for investment, technology and jobs .... [where] .... the prosperity of workers will depend on an ability to trade their skills, knowledge and entrepreneurial acumen in an unfettered global market-place.” Changes from Fordist to post-Fordist production processes, and advancements in information technology, have accelerated the global spread and mobility of capital and TNCs who increasingly dictate economic practices and challenge the capability of national governments to have command of their national economies (Broomhill, 1995; Reich, 1991; Rifkin, 1995; Thomson, 1998).

For nation-states, the aforementioned changes at a global level have meant that they have had to strive to improve their international competitive advantage (S. Davies & Guppy, 1997). The discursive claim by promoters of economic globalisation, such as TNCs, is that national economies are being increasingly incorporated into a global economy and that international markets should direct economic and public policy rather than national, social, economic and/or political requirements (Brown, Halsey, Lauder, & Wells, 1997; Brown & Lauder, 1996; Dudley, 1998; Smyth et al., 2000). The implications of economic globalisation on national economies and the role of governments to manage their economies is summarised by Currie (2003):

... globalizing politicians introduce competition policies into their countries to create a level playing field for different economic actors. They lower trade tariffs to allow competition from companies overseas. They deregulate their financial systems to allow foreign banks to enter their countries and float their currencies. Essentially, globalizing politicians are removing their governments from the economy by reducing regulation of economic activities to the absolute minimum. (p. 484)

According to Yeatman (1993, p. 3), what this effectively means is that we are now witnessing “new types of transnational structures of privately-oriented economic activity” either directly or indirectly influencing public policy agendas of nation-states in areas such as education.

### ***Global challenges to the Keynesian welfare state: Revival of the market***

The 1970s crisis of capitalism, the end of full employment since World War II and the changing bases of capital accumulation as a part of economic globalisation processes, acted as a catalyst for extensive criticism by advocates of a New Right interpretation of the Fordist accumulation crisis, or crisis of legitimacy of the welfare state that was recognisable in all OECD countries during the mid-1980s (Bryson, 1992; Mishra, 1984; C. Offe, 1984b). The criticisms of the welfare state by the New Right were extensive but the main arguments are summarised by Brown and Lauder (1996) who state:

The New Right ... assert it is no coincidence that at the same time as western governments were significantly increasing expenditure on social welfare programmes, there was high inflation, rising unemployment, and economic stagnation ... Western societies have run into trouble because of the extensive and unwarranted interference by the state. Inflation, high unemployment, economic recession ... all stem from the legacy of Keynesian economics and an egalitarian

ideology which promoted economic redistribution, equality of opportunity, and welfare rights for all. (pp. 5-6)

Pannu (1996, p. 87) suggests that the re-emergence of neo-liberalism, which is a key feature of economic globalisation, has become a powerful discursive ideological force for economic structural transformation and the reconfiguration of state forms. The terms New Right, economic rationalism and neo-liberalism are often used interchangeably, and as an ideological representation the central beliefs include:

- that capitalism is the most appropriate form of social and economic organisation;
- that there should be an unimpeded flow of capital across national boundaries - with the least political interference;
- a belief in the notion of individual freedom and competitive individualism; and
- a reduced role for the state and a maximisation of the market (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 136).

The New Right discourse around the fiscal crisis of the state contains a new set of assumptions about the role of government and the rights of citizens whereby governments need to be more efficient and effective, and citizens need to be more self-reliant. For the neo-liberal, the primary role of the state is that of a “mediator” and an “instigator” to ensure the successful functioning of the market (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 138). Neo-liberalism gives primacy to the market over the state as a societal steering mechanism and, as Rizvi and Lingard (1997) contend:

The revival of the market has been accompanied by the adoption of free market ideologies that seek to minimise the role and responsibilities of the state in the social sphere. A market is viewed as the coordinating mechanism that brings about a balanced equilibrium between the forces of supply and demand. The market determines prices, output and methods of production. This economic theory suggests that the changing international political economy puts roughly the same demands on all governments, including the need to promote exports, reduce social spending, curtail state economic regulation and thus empower capital to re-organise ‘national’ economies. The ideology thus demands the restructuring of the state, particularly its public sector. (p. xviii)

From the 1980s onwards, economic globalisation and the challenges to the Keynesian welfare state have led to a change in the policies and policy development processes used by nation-states (Brodie, 1996; Cerny, 1990; Lingard & Rizvi, 1998; Olssen et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 1997). As Taylor et al. (1997, p. 80) conclude, it is “the impact of economic

globalisation, crises of the state, the search for a post-Keynesian settlement”, along with the elevation of neo-liberalism as a dominant discourse, that contribute to calls for the restructuring of the state. In effect, the restructuring of the economy parallels the restructuring of other significant social and political institutions.

One response from most western societies to the pressure from corporate capital and advocates of liberal economics was to bring the politics surrounding transnational capital and state organisational structures into greater alignment through significant political and economic restructuring of the state (Lingard, 2000b). The implications of introducing market mechanisms has resulted in a radical restructuring of the post-war Keynesian welfare state (a form that was dominant in many western nations) with a new form of governance more aligned with emerging post-Fordist modes of production (S. Robertson & Dale, 2002, p. 465). In response to a more globalised context, the reconfigured state, which is variously described as “evaluative” (Neave, 1988, pp. 10-11), “competitive” (Cerny, 1990, p. 229) “managerial” (Clarke & Newman, 1997, p. ix) or “postmodern” (Lingard, 1996, p. 68), is now orientated towards facilitating competitiveness within the context of an internationalised economic framework. Within this new economic context, social policy is subordinate to the demands of the market. The focus is to support labour and the flexibility of production rather than stability and social economic security (Jessop, 2002). Cerny (1990) describes the implications of the shifting role of the state as follows:

The state is no longer in a position anywhere to pursue the general welfare as if it were mainly a domestic problem. As the world economy is characterized by increasing interpenetration and the crystallization of transnational markets and structures, the state itself is having to act more and more like a market player, that shapes its policies to promote, control, and maximize returns from market forces in an international setting. (p. 230)

Having explored how the macro level factors and pressures confronting western countries from the late-1970s onwards provide the broader policy analysis context in which nation-states have sought to restructure their economies and transform the role and function of the state, I now address how nation-states have responded to these pressures through reforming the purpose and provision of public education.

## TOWARD A GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY CONSENSUS

Many educational commentators maintain that there is a new policy consensus or settlement globally within education which reflects both the material and discursive aspects of economic globalisation and neo-liberalism (Ball, 1998a; Brown et al., 1997; Brown & Lauder, 1996; Henry et al., 2001; Lingard, 2000b; Ozga & Jones, 2006; Taylor et al., 1997). As part of this emerging education “policy consensus globally” (Lingard, 2000b, p. 83), or “the new orthodoxy” (Carter & O’Neil cited in Ball, 1998a, p. 122), the ideas policy makers at national, international and transnational levels draw on to reshape education systems include:

- improving national economics by tightening the connection between schooling, employment, productivity and trade;
- enhancing student outcomes in employment-related skills and competencies;
- attaining more direct control over curriculum content and assessment;
- reducing the cost to government of education; [and]
- increasing community input to education by more involvement in school decision making and pressure of market choice. (p. 122)

These policy discourses are drawn from economic rationalism, post-Fordist responses to globalisation, the reconstitution of human capital theory in education and new managerialism (Ball, 1998a; J. Mok, 2005; Olssen et al., 2004). At the heart of this “new global educational policy consensus” (Lingard, 2000b, p. 84) is the impact of economic globalisation processes on the economy of nation-states and the accompanying neo-liberal ideology. Economic rationalism (or neo-liberalism) has resulted in education in most western countries being constructed as a component of micro-economic reform and public education as a marketable commodity. The emphasis on fiscal restraint requires that the provision of public education is of minimal cost to the state (Dudley, 1998; Taylor et al., 1997).

Reid (2002, p. 571) asserts that, where western nations have embraced the philosophies underpinning this global policy consensus there has been a weakening of the liberal democratic perspective of education as a “public” or common good that facilitates “nation building.” Rather, there has been a reorientation of the purpose of public education to fulfil more instrumental, work-related and economic goals to complement

post-Fordist accumulation processes so that nations are more competitive in the international capitalist market. The provision of education is now constructed as a commodity whose primary benefits are economic for individual consumers who make product choices in an educational market (Dudley, 1998; Lingard et al., 1995; Reid, 2002, 2003; Reid & Johnson, 1995; Thomson, 1998).

Meeting the requirement of post-Fordist accumulation processes means that schools are required to produce skilled, efficient and flexible (post-Fordist) workers to suit a competitive restructured economy (Dudley, 1998; Reid, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b). The ideal post-Fordist worker is required to be multi-skilled, to cooperate in a group environment, and to be able to apply knowledge across broader work areas. In this regard, post-Fordism, as S. Robertson (1993, p. 121) explains, “relies on the learning capacity of its workers in order to gain the competitive edge in an environment where machinery is a cost and labour an asset.” This has resulted in far greater links between school and industry, a post-Fordist human capital framing of the purpose of public education and a focus on competency-based training and skills formation for a more competitive knowledge based economy (Thomson, 1998). A key assumption behind these restructuring initiatives is that the increased productivity and efficiency of highly skilled flexible workers will provide a competitive edge for nations who compete in the global market-place for foreign investment, technological development and the hosting of multinational companies (Blackmore, 1993; Smyth et al., 2000; Strange, 1992).

### **Transnational Organisations, Agenda-building and Educational Reform Discourses**

Comparative education literature reveals that globalisation has intensified the emergence of post-national relationships and the role of international organisations as world-level agencies that influence the convergence of educational ideologies and policies within and among nation-states around the globe (Dale, 1999a; Henry et al., 2001; Kenway, Bullen, & Robb, 2003; Lingard, 2000b; Marginson, 1993, 1997b; McNeely & Cha, 1994; Taylor & Henry, 2000). As Dale (1999a) states:

... what distinguishes globalization from imperialism and colonialism is that it is supranational; it is not initiated by a single country, or carried out by nations on nations, but by supranational organisations, albeit dominated by the same group of nations that were previously involved separately in bilateral mechanisms .... a more direct and more immediately relevant consequence is the development of

*supranational* responses to common problems for states in a globalized context. (p. 11)

Debates about the purpose of public education, and discourses promoting new forms of educational governance, have been circulating through transnational organisations at the global level since the late-1970s (Ball, 2001; S. Davies & Guppy, 1997; Henry et al., 2001; P. Jones, 1998). While transnational organisations have different constituencies and purposes, their “ideas circulate” amongst “emergent global policy communities” (Taylor & Henry, 2000, p. 501). Sklair (1996) describes these communities as:

... globalising bureaucrats [who] are active in powerful international organisations, notably the World Bank, IMF, and the OECD, and ... work politically through what have been termed ‘corporatist’ agencies that combine representatives of the state, business and labour. (p 5)

Despite many of these organisations having different levels of influence, Sklair (1996, p. 5) maintains that “the culture and ideology” of this group combines neo-liberalism and “global nationalism”, and includes “the view that the best interests of the country lie in its rapid integration with the global capitalist system while maintaining its national identity.” In a similar vein, Kenway et al. (2003, p. 6) observe that “when supra- and international organisations talk about education, the conversations are almost inevitably intertwined with ‘new economy’ narratives and variants such as the knowledge (-based, -driven) economy.”

Transnational organisations such as the OECD, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereafter UNESCO), the World Bank and the IMF have been instrumental in framing discourses at the global level and promoting a “new global educational policy consensus” (Lingard, 2000b, p. 84) in which a human capital view of education and decentralisation and community participation policies are key educational restructuring strategies (Blackmore, 1993; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Carnoy, 2000; Dale, 1999a, 2005; Green, 1999; Henry et al., 2001). These international organisations have also served as a significant “institutionalizing mechanism[s]” (McNeely & Cha, 1994) for legitimising the ideas and philosophies informing the new global education policy consensus (Henry et al., 2001; Lingard, 2000b; S. Robertson, 2005; Spring, 1998).

Dale (1999a, 2005) examines how transnational organisations, such as the OECD, as part of an emerging global policy community, or network (Vidovich, 2007), facilitate



educational policy convergence through their agenda-building activities. Drawing on the work of Lukes, Dale (2005) asserts that these organisations exercise power through defining the agenda and discourses around which policy decisions are to be made and limiting the nature of the solutions available. This, he argues, is an effective form of exercising power as it promotes certain issues and solutions while not exposing others to the decision-making arena. Understanding how transnational organisations use their influence and resources to structure global policy agendas and discourses helps to explain how preferences for education policies such as devolution and community participation are disseminated and adopted by individual nation-states (McNeely & Cha, 1994).

Organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and the OECD, by the very nature of their high international standing, funding power and cross-national connections, not only develop and legitimate discourses about education policy but also influence the policy agendas of their members (Dale, 1999a, 2005; J. Mok, 2005; Rinne, Kallo, & Hokka, 2004; S. Robertson, 2005). For example, while the OECD identifies itself as a “unique forum” where governments can gather to discuss and formulate economic and social policy (OECD, 1994, p. 7), according to Rinne et al. (2004, p. 456), it has become the “*éminence grise*” of education policy and exercises extensive power through advising its member countries’ high level influential government officials.

Of central concern in agenda-building processes is the use of language and information to promote certain educational discourses, an important function of international organisations. For example, the OECD claims a central position internationally in the collection, processing, classification, analysing, storing, supplying and marketing of education policy information. Such an extensive control of information is claimed to enable the transnational exchange of information, to provide opportunities for establishing internationally accepted discourses and educational standards through the dissemination of publications, and to enable access to “expert consultants” (McNeely & Cha, 1994, n.p.). As Schriewer (cited in Rinne et al., 2004) explains:

International organisations have had an exceptional influence on the globalisation of education, in which the clustering of communications and publication systems on several levels and on various scales has played a major role. That is these organisations do not merely offer secure institutional frameworks for broad cooperation in education policy, but also well-funded publication channels which offer exceptional opportunities to exert international influence. (p. 461)

International organisations also sponsor conferences, meetings and workshops to address particular educational issues. As Dale (1999a, p. 13) says, the processes used in these forums often reflect elements of an “anticipatory policy convergence” around an internationally approved agenda. In a similar vein, Papadopoulos (1994) draws on his experience of working for the OECD to show how the organisation uses agenda-building processes to shape the nature of issues for consideration and to structure educational discourses to influence national policy agendas. He explains that the organisation’s role:

... must be sought in terms of a ‘catalytic role’, through a process (whose) starting point is the identification of major new policy issues which emerge on the educational horizon, and which might call for priority attention in the countries. These are issues which are somewhat ahead of actual country developments and thinking. These issues are then put together within a structured framework, leading to a number of questions which arise for policy-making. Arriving at a convincing statement of such issues and questions, of how and why they arise, and of their implications, is already half the work done. (p. 13)

Other educational commentators observe that the success of the OECD in promoting education reform also comes from the organisational use of implied “threats.” That is, “negative scenarios” are painted around nations being left behind if they fail to adopt progressive education policies (Vongalis & Seddon, 2001, n.p.).

Smyth and Shacklock (1998b) contend from the late-1970s onwards, pressure grew from international organisations, such as the OECD, to reform national education systems. The OECD provided the environment to build the agenda for educational change across developed countries through incubating a number of concerns which were acted upon by education policy makers around the world. These concerns were constructed along the lines that schools were not producing the types of workers needed for nations to compete in a global economy and that schools were failing to provide cost-effective quality education (O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b).

The problems with public education identified by the OECD were located within a national economic crisis discourse at a global level and can be traced back to numerous publications and international ministerial conferences sponsored by the OECD (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b, pp. 68-72). At the first OECD Ministers’ of Education Conference in 1978, *Future Educational Policies in the Changing Social and Economic Context*, the relationship between education and the global economic competitiveness of western

countries was high on the OECD's agenda. There was strong support for educational restructuring in the context of a globalising economy by promoting a human capital view of the purpose of education (Henry & Taylor, 1997, p. 49). The pervasiveness of the OECD's preference for the new education policy consensus is expressed by Lingard (1996):

Since the eighties, the OECD, as an international policy agency, has been pushing a micro-economically refocussed human capital theory to its members. This theory is about education's contribution to the production of multi-skilled workers to assist in the international competitiveness of national economies. (p. 78)

In an OECD report, *Structural Adjustment and Economic Performance*, 1987 (cited in Marginson, 1993, p. 48), public education across developed countries was clearly seen as failing to produce multi-skilled workers to assist in the international competitiveness of national economies. As Apple (1992, p. 127) concludes, education was “almost always seen against the backdrop of a crisis in productivity and competition.” In 1988, another major OECD conference, *Education and the Economy in a Changing Society* (cited in Henry & Taylor, 1997, p. 49), took as its theme the convergence of education and economic functions in the new global context and argued the necessity of a human capital view of education. The OECD constructed a particular view of globalisation which portrayed member countries as “potential winners” in the global economy and public education as both a problem for and a solution to international economic competitiveness (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 72). Documents such as *Schools and Quality: An International Report*, (1989), and *The Teacher Today* (1990), have, as Smyth and Shacklock (1998b) suggest, also promoted the re-emergence of human capital views of education and the importance of education responding to international competition.

Like the OECD, other supranational organisations, such as UNESCO and the World Bank, have continued to play an important agenda-building role in constructing the problems with national education systems. The solutions promoted by these organisations include restructuring educational systems so that the purpose of public education reflects a human capital view where a culture of performativity in schools is emphasised (Lingard, 2000b; Marginson, 1993; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b). Taylor and Henry (2000, p. 501) conclude from their research that, “the rhetoric of human capital investment” in education has been so extensively promoted by the OECD and the World

Bank to the extent that it constitutes “a global discourse, shaping the parameters of policymaking in most countries” as well as transnational organisations.

### **Nation-States and Neo-liberal Educational Restructuring Discourses**

Similar to other OECD countries, the global economic recession, the associated emergence of New Right influences along with global neo-liberal education reform discourses promoted by transnational organisations, led to a growing belief by governments that public education was partially responsible for the economic downturn through inadequately preparing students for the work force (Browning, 2003; O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Olssen et al., 2004; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b). From the late-1970s onwards various Australian Federal Government educational reports attempted to realign more closely state secondary schooling with the needs of capital. Growing youth unemployment enabled the Coalition Fraser Government (1975-1983) to denigrate progressive educational reforms promoted by the previous Labor Government (Freeland & Sharp, 1981) and to promote an official educational discourse of economic efficiency to redefine the nature, purpose and content of state secondary schooling in Australia. Down (1997, p. 108) says that the Fraser Coalition Government's first major report, *Education, Training and Employment: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education and Training* (1979) (hereafter *Williams Report*, 1979), “signalled the demise of the social democratic settlement of the 1960s” in education. The *Williams Report* (1979) proposed a view of education as being in the national interest and, as L. Angus (1992, p. 387) contends, “refocussed attention on human capital and the labour market .... education was about jobs and the profitability of industry” which aimed to “redefine the purpose of education in terms of a material utility.” The *Williams Report* (1979) argued that Australia's economic crisis and high youth unemployment were the result of the failure of past education policies to produce people who could easily adapt to the rapidly changing labour market. Down (1997, p. 109) suggests that the “ideological work” of the *Williams Report* (1979) “paved the way” for a series of Federal and State Government reports into the relationship between schools and youth unemployment as well as considerable debate about the aims, purpose and content of state secondary schooling in Australia.

### ***Linking education and international competitiveness: A human capital view***

The Labor Hawke/Keating Government, (1983-1991) while continuing the Fraser Coalition Government's trend to link education to national economic survival and to rationalise education funding to the Australian States/Territory, also aggressively claimed a far greater role in identifying national priorities in education as a way of responding to global influences and pressures. Although public education is primarily a state responsibility, the Federal Government provides funding through a system of state grants under "Section 96 of the Constitution" (Ryan & Watson, 2004, p. 7). This funding arrangement was to become an important policy lever for introducing Federal Government education policy directions throughout the 1980s and beyond. As Lingard (2000a) explains:

The idea of the federal government being more than a banker for schools, both government and non-government took hold, as did the notion that the federal government had some sort of leadership role in respect of schooling, particularly given the linkages between a human capital construction of schooling and an economically orientated definition of the national interest; this was a specifically Australian manifestation of an emergent consensus world-wide as to how education should be linked to the global economy after the 'breakdown of economic nationalism' ... schooling was to contribute to the production of economic citizens. (p. 45)

The development of national education policies took hold when John Dawkins (1987-1991) was the Federal Labor Minister for Employment and Training. The policy manoeuvre towards national educational development was, as Lingard and Porter (1997, p. 8) contend, related to a "reworking of federalism" by the Prime Minister. In this regard, "national policies were deemed necessary because of the hypothesised significance of an integrated education and training system to the demands and exigencies of globalisation" (Lingard, 2000a, p. 54). The Federal Government held public schools responsible for failing to produce highly skilled employees to meet the requirements of the globalisation of the economy (Haynes, 1997; Levin & Riffel, 1997; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b).

Many of the ideas about the problems with public education and the associated solutions circulating at the global level are reflected in a number of reports commissioned by the Federal Labor Government throughout the 1980s. Down (1997, p. 110) contends that Federal Government documents such as *Quality of Education in Australia* (1985), *In the National Interest: Secondary Education and Youth Policy in Australia* (1987), and *A*

*Changing Workforce* (1988), “played a major role in articulating official state ideology on the nature and role of state secondary education” and contained themes similar to those circulating at a global level about the necessity of international survival, national efficiency and the need for education to produce a trained workforce.

Key education restructuring policy documents such as *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins & Holding, 1987) and *Strengthening Australian Schools: A Consideration of the Content and Focus of Schooling* (Dawkins, 1988) (hereafter *Strengthening Australian Schools*) reflected a post-Fordist new human capital framing of education. *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins & Holding, 1987) reinforced the dominant view within the Hawke Labor Government that education and schooling must respond directly to the needs of the economy. The document urged a stronger role for schools in the development of labour force skills, and clearly signalled the intention to link national educational goals to economic priorities (Smart & Dudley, 1990). *Strengthening Australian Schools* (Dawkins, 1988, pp. 3-5) was central to the Minister’s national approach to schooling and focused on the contribution education was to make in the production of a flexible, multi-skilled workforce and in the creation of a more efficient education system.

Rather than present a totalising view of the role of transnational organisations in bringing about education reform in western nations, Taylor and Henry (2000) point out that while international organisations, such as the OECD, have played a policy agenda-building role by establishing the credibility of the view of education as subordinate to the economy, within the Australian context, Minister Dawkins also used the OECD to legitimate and promote his economic rationalist reform agenda for education. This included “the role of education and training in skills development for the global economy, the need for educational restructuring to achieve this end, and the complementarity of economic and social purposes of education” (Taylor & Henry, 2000, p. 493).

Australian education policy documents, such as *Strengthening Australian Schools* (Dawkins, 1988), “paralleled” the United States of America’s *A Nation at Risk* (1983), and the United Kingdom’s *Education Reform Act* (1988) (Welch, 1996, p. 17) to the extent that all of these contentious documents carried the message that “the nation’s future depended upon the nation’s schools” (Louden & Browne, 1993, p. 125). A common theme underpinning these policy documents was the need to increase international competitiveness through increasing educational productivity through

enhancing human capital to prepare workers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Koppich & Guthrie, 1993, p. 53).

### **Quality educational discourses**

Since the mid-1980s, organisations such as the OECD have also featured prominently in the propagation of an international discourse around quality schooling which, as Smyth and Shacklock (1998b, p. 81) contend, now “appears natural, commonsense, and as having all the right hallmarks of institutional respectability.” Documents such as *The Teacher Today* (OECD cited in Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b, p. 81) and *Schools and Quality: An International Report* (OECD cited in Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b, p. 81) emphasise the problem with the quality of education in public schools. These reports question whether public schools provide value for money, how efficient they are, and pose solutions for increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and the quality of national public education systems. A key theme is that quality education should be couched in economic terms and the pressure should be applied to schools for greater accountability for educational outcomes (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b, pp. 81-82). President Reagan’s task force report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), also questioned the efficiency and effectiveness of the American public education system. The lack of accountability of schools to provide a quality education was given as the reason for high youth unemployment (Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991; Levin, 2001b; Marcus, 1990; Neubert, 1995). *A Nation at Risk* (1983) also criticised teachers and principals for a lack of productivity, the production of unskilled graduates, a high rate of student drop-out rates and the failure to provide value for money (Levin, 2001b; Murphy, 1990; Neubert, 1995). Like *A Nation at Risk* (1983), the *Education Reform Act* (1988) and subsequent *Education (School) Act* (1992) in the United Kingdom were driven by conservative governments committed to a neo-liberal ideology to raise educational standards, to reduce the cost of public education and to attain value for money in a time of economic downturn.

Within Australia, similar claims about the poor quality of public education were made in *Skills for Australia* (Dawkins & Holding, 1987). Browning (2003) says in *Skills for Australia* it was argued that:

Australia lagged behind other comparative countries in the proportion of the workforce holding post-school qualifications. School retention

rates were compared with Japan and America and it was concluded that there was an overall need to boost the levels of both quality and quantity of education within the community. The document also argued (amongst other things) that increases in participation rates alone were not sufficient to generate the level of skills required by the nation's economic circumstances. Consequently, there was a need to improve quality, structures and the flexibility of education and the need for national educational goals to become increasingly vocationalised. (p. 93)

Reports by the OECD, such as *Education at a Glance*, were used to bench mark the performance of public education systems (Brydon cited in Hopkins, 1993, p. 13). The Report identifies that eight of the eighteen OECD countries with available data had upper secondary graduation levels of 80 percent or higher in 1988 compared to the Australian rate at that time of 72.2 percent (p.13). Smyth and Shacklock (1998b) contend that comparative statistics of this nature have played a role in the justification for the Australian National Government taking a stronger role in many areas of education policy. Policies such as *Strengthening Australian Schools* (Dawkins, 1988) argued for the need to create a clear statement of the fundamental purposes of schooling and to bolster retention rates. As a result of changing international economic circumstances, target participation rates of 95 percent in post-compulsory education by the year 2001 were proposed to guide school retention strategies and to reduce youth unemployment (Dwyer, 1996), which had dramatically increased from approximately 3 percent in 1968 to 22.5 percent in 1983 (Down, 1997, p. 104). The access and retention discourses can be seen, therefore, as one strategy adopted by the Federal Government to tighten the connection between school, employment and the work place.

To address these issues, Minister Dawkins used the Australian Education Council (hereafter AEC), which comprised Directors-General and Ministers of Education from the States and Chief Executive Officers from the Territories, to promote, legitimate and steer his national agenda to link education to the economy and to develop national goals for public education, a training reform agenda and to vocationalise curriculum. The AEC is the intergovernmental council which 'manages' federalism in Australian schooling. From the AEC's deliberations common curriculum frameworks, national goals for schooling, collaboration in curriculum development and reporting on school performance emerged (Fitzclarence & Kenway, 1993; Porter, Lingard, & Knight, 1994). Minister Dawkins also precipitated a *good schools* debate through the AEC by supporting and promoting the view that Commonwealth funding should be allocated to State education



systems that reflected “national priorities” and quantifiable indicators of the provision of quality education (Louden & Browne, 1993, pp. 126-127).

In 1991, the AEC launched a *Good Schools Strategy* (Townsend, 1996, p. 119) and, while not immediately apparent, it commenced the movement towards a market-place philosophy. The basic premise of the market-place is to open up schools to parent choice which, as Beare (1991, p. 21) contends, reflects “the politics of privatisation.” This policy manoeuvre was also evident in the Thatcherite philosophies of the 1980s which led to a competitive culture amongst schools in Britain. These changes were driven by neo-liberal global influences of marketisation, competition and accountability which were intermeshed with goals of increasing efficiency and effectiveness in the public education system (O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; H. Thomas, 1993).

### ***Vocationalist discourses***

Throughout the early 1990s a vocationalist discourse underpinned by a human capital view of education, which had been circulating through international agencies such as the OECD since the 1980s emerged as a key educational discourse throughout the early-1990s under the Keating Labor Federal Government (1991-1996) (Taylor et al., 1997). The report, *Young People's Participation in Post Compulsory Education* (Finn, 1991) (hereafter *The Finn Report*), into post-compulsory schooling, and *The Key Competencies: Putting General Education to Work* (Mayer, 1992) (hereafter *The Mayer Report*), created a list of employment related competencies to be included in the curriculum to facilitate “effective” participation in work (Townsend, 1996, p. 17). The significance of introducing competencies, as Dudley and Vidovich (1995, p. 173) point out, is that they not only reflect “a utilitarian orientation” because the “outcomes ... relate to the needs of the economy”, but they act as a “skills currency” that can be traded on the market (Marginson, 1993, p. 153). *The Finn Report* (Finn, 1991), *The Vocational Certificate Training System* (Carmichael, 1992) (hereafter *Carmichael Report*), and *Mayer Report* (Mayer, 1992) continued to reinforce links between education and employment which had become a feature of the national view of education. All reports pointed to the need to increase participation of 15 to 19 year olds in education and training as a way of strengthening the nexus between education and the economy. *The Finn Report* (Finn, 1991) also recommended that, by the year 2001, 90 percent of all young people at the age of 19 years should have completed Year 12, or an initial post-school

qualification, and there should be the development of more vocational options in Years 11 and 12.

The *Carmichael Report* (Carmichael, 1992) further developed many of these ideas and recommended the establishment of the Australian Vocational Certificate, the setting of a target of 90 percent of young people to complete Year 12 or equivalent by 2001, and the reform in curricula towards more vocational options in Years 11 and 12. To promote the notion of flexible delivery arrangements, the Report also recommended a nation-wide development of public and private senior colleges, separate from secondary Years 7-10, as a way of Year 11 and 12 students interfacing with higher education institutions and, therefore, bolstering retention rates. As Dudley and Vidovich (1995, p. 173) point out, the approach to education reform in these reports contains an “underlying assumption that enrolling more young people for longer in more vocationally-oriented courses will improve national economic efficiency and productivity [which] is consistent with a human capital approach.” From this perspective, “students are both a value-added product” and the means by which national economic goals may be attained (Knight et al., 1993, p. 7).

### **Corporate Managerialism, Devolution and Community Participation**

While transnational organisations, such as the OECD, have played an agenda-building role in shifting ideas about the purpose of public education, they have also promoted new modes of governance of public education systems based on organisational paradigms from the corporate world that are oriented toward post-Fordist organisational structures and processes. Consistent with neo-liberal ideology, transnational organisations, such as the OECD, promoted new managerialism as a means for restructuring education systems (Ball, 2001; Henry et al., 2001; Lingard, 2000b; Marginson, 1993; K. Mok & Welch, 2002; Rinne et al., 2004; Taylor et al., 1997) of which devolution and localised decision-making within a centrally driven context are key features (Brown & Lauder, 1996; Kenway et al., 2003; Olssen et al., 2004; Soucek, 1994). The policy discourses of devolution and community participation, while local educational issues, can therefore be understood as supranational phenomena.

Henry et al. (2001, p. 32) discuss an OECD report titled *Governance in Transition: Public Management Reforms in OECD Countries*. While this Report, which was published in 1995, recognises that the public sector has an impact on total efficiency, state

bureaucracies are criticised as “highly centralised, rule bound, and inflexible organisations” that give greater emphasis to process rather than results which “impede[s] good performance” (OECD cited in Henry et al., 2001, p. 32). The OECD document highlights the limitations of bureaucratic educational systems relative to the new managerialist restructuring approach of decentralisation as a means to legitimate and argue the necessity to restructure education systems (Henry et al., 2001).

In a similar vein, the World Bank’s publications throughout the 1990s argued the case for education restructuring. Driven by neo-liberal principles of efficiency, the reforms urged substantial devolution to the local level and the reform of public authorities in education along business lines (J. Mok, 2005; K. Watson, 1996). Recently, the World Bank has argued that “adaptability, creativity, flexibility and innovation”, which characterise a human capital approach to education, will only be realised in deregulated education systems where competition is promoted and business plays a key role (World Bank cited in Ozga & Jones, 2006, p. 2). By the mid-1990s, similar to the World Bank, UNESCO promoted school autonomy and education decentralisation policies as essential reforms and rationalised these policies from an economic rationalist and social democratic perspective (UNESCO cited in Rhoten, 2000, p. 603). While there are variations in the decentralisation of education governance amongst agencies such as the OECD and the World Bank, Bjork (2004, p. 248) claims that “governments that did not embrace decentralisation risked losing legitimacy in international circles.”

Since the mid-1980s, debates about the purpose of education and the shifting philosophies of educational governance have taken on a sense of immediacy within local contexts. As Osborne and Gaebler (1992, pp. 322-330) suggest, one of the effects of globalisation and the associated influences of economic crisis, changing capital accumulation processes and the emergence of neo-liberal ideologies is the emergence of the new public sector management as a “global paradigm” (Hood, 1995a, pp. 322-330).

In OECD countries, corporate managerialism or new public management has transformed how public education is managed (Flynn, 1997; Hood, 1991, 1995b). The shift to corporate managerialism has seen (post-Fordist) private sector management practices introduced into the public sector in the form of decentralised education systems (Lingard, 2000b; O'Brien & Down, 2002; Taylor et al., 1997; Yeatman, 1990). At the school level, post-Fordist philosophy plays out in different ways. First, the structure of the educational

system and the way of organising schools is similar to the way in which private companies are organised. Second, the new global economy is more fluid and flexible and requires workers with the capacity to learn quickly and to work in reliable and creative ways. Economic restructuring, therefore, requires the development of educational policies that attempt to restructure educational systems along entrepreneurial lines in order to provide flexible responses to the new model of industrial production (Burbules & Torres, 2000).

In Australia, managerialism is regarded as the administrative form associated with the ideology of neo-liberalism, the New Right or economic rationalism as it is referred to in Australia (Marginson, 1993; Pusey, 1991). Within the Australian context, Federal and State Governments implemented a corporate managerialist restructuring of the public sector from the mid-1980s onwards (Knight et al., 1993; O'Brien & Down, 2002; Pusey, 1991; Taylor et al., 1997; Yeatman, 1990, 1993). Driven by an economic rationalist agenda, this has meant that the state has been restructured along market lines resulting in a smaller and more business-oriented state apparatus where management techniques and structures drawn from business corporations are implemented to improve efficiency and effectiveness and to maximise public sector productivity. The role of the public sector, which was to service a welfare state, has been restructured to function within a business paradigm in an internationally competitive environment (Yeatman, 1993).

Closely connected to devolution were ideas about community participation in decision-making. With the “first wave” of administrative and fiscal decentralisation, the rationale for decentralisation was primarily one of cost-efficiency in the provision of education (Vongalis, 2001, p. 4). In contrast, by the 1990s, the rationale focused on the redistribution of political power and the discourses of democratisation formed part of the argument for restructuring the provision of education (Rhoten, 2000).

While Blackmore (1993, p. 1) contends that devolution is a response to global discourses that call for an “administrative strategy” which can lead to more efficient, accountable and effective education systems that link education to employment, she also points out that devolution takes on different meanings depending on the socio-political and organisational context within which the practice is occurring. Astiz et al. (2002) claim that discourses of devolution and community participation can accommodate seemingly competing ideological positions when they are promoted as:

- being democratic, efficient, and accountable;
- being more responsive to the community and to local needs and accountable to the central office;
- empowering [for] teachers, parents, and others in the education community while improving the efficiency and effectiveness of school reform; and
- being able to improve school quality [and enhancing social equity]. (p. 70)

By drawing together different philosophical ideas about devolution, Whitty, et al. (1998, p. 44) suggest that devolution and community participation can be seen as new ways for the state to tackle “the problems of accumulation and legitimation in a situation where the traditional Keynesian ‘welfare state’ is no longer deemed viable.” What this means is that devolution and community participation are ways in which the state attempts to secure legitimacy for its education policies and to displace responsibility for the inherent inequalities of capitalism which arose in the 1980s in western countries through rising unemployment and economic decline (Whitty et al., 1998). As Apple (1996a, p. 88) explains, governments “must be *seen* to be doing something ... reforming education is not only widely accepted and relatively unthreatening, but just as crucially its success or failure will not be obvious in the short term.” Whitty et al. (1998) add:

... whereas in the past attempts to restore legitimacy may have involved increasing bureaucratization and greater ‘expert’ intervention, these processes are now seen as the problem rather than the solution. Bureaucratic control of education, it is suggested, stifles responsiveness to the needs of business and industry. (pp. 44-45)

In a similar vein, Weiler (1989, 1990) suggests that, during a legitimation crisis which throughout the 1980s manifested as a crisis of the welfare state, the state gains added legitimacy by drawing on rhetoric that appears to be sensitive to democratic expression and local needs. Devolution can be promoted as a form of education restructuring that is the articulation of democratic representation and the mechanism through which local communities can participate in the educational decision-making of the state while at the same time fulfilling the neo-liberal managerialist requirement of improving the efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of the provision of education services (Cox, 1995; Giddens, 1998; Latham, 1998; Yeatman, 1996). Understanding the different meanings attached to policies of education decentralisation goes some way toward explaining why support for devolution of authority to local communities has transcended

political party lines and devolution has been promoted on the basis that the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be better met by a devolved education system (Blackmore, 1993, 1999; Dehli, 2004; Larner, 2000; Sears, 2003; Smyth, 2001).

### ***Devolution and the state steering at a distance***

Corporate managerialism and moves towards devolutionary policies have given rise to vigorous debate on the ways education policy production and enactment can be managed. There are often tensions and debates around what centralisation, decentralisation and community participation mean in practice in educational systems. Ozga (2003) has researched the structural and relational changes of devolution and decentralisation in national educational contexts including in Australia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, England and Scotland. In all of these education systems that had adopted policies of decentralisation and devolution, Ozga found new management practices of re-centralisation. This new management arrangement has been referred to as “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135), which Neave (1988, p. 12) explains involves “a rationalisation and wholesale redistribution of functions between centre and periphery such that the centre maintains overall strategic control through fewer, but more precise, policy levers.” This redefinition of devolution ensures that the management function of central agencies is paramount, and local agencies and communities are restricted to, as Lingard and Rizvi (1992) point out:

... the opportunity to implement policies determined at the centre, where educational issues are often secondary. Communities become an instrument of the central state, rather than empowered in a way celebrated in the social democratic construction of devolution. (p. 121)

This policy strategy of steering at a distance, which is a defining feature of the “reconfigured state” (Lingard, 1993, p. 41) according to Vidovich and Porter (1999, p. 581), reflects “the simultaneous but contradictory changes which characterise the New Right ideology towards de-regulation, decentralisation and devolution on the one hand, yet greater centralisation and government intervention on the other.” When viewed in this context, devolution raises significant questions about who has a legitimate interest in decision-making in education and whose interests are served by the different understandings of devolution in practice (Blackmore, 1993).

While many critical education researchers agree that there is a paradigm convergence of ideas circulating at a global level about education reform, they argue that nation-states mediate policy ideas according to local contextual factors. Many countries have been dismantling centralised education bureaucracies but there is considerable diversity in the forms of self-governance strategies enacted at the local level (L. Angus, 2004; Ball, 1998a, 2001; Lingard, 2000b; Taylor et al., 1997; Whitty et al., 1998). Dale (1999a, 1999b) emphasises, however, that while the nature of the education restructuring paradigms and discourses may have been determined at a global level via agenda-building processes by supranational organisations, decisions about the details of education restructuring are still made at a national and state level. This perspective is useful for this research because it suggests a form of “vernacular globalization” (Lingard, 2000b, pp. 80-81). Policy convergence in relation to ideas about education reform and restructuring is recognised but, at the same time, the tensions between globalisation and localisation, and the diversity of national or local responses to these tensions, are emphasised (L. Angus, 2004; Ball, 1998a, 2001; Law, 2004; Lingard, 2000b; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Ozga, 2003; Vidovich, 2004).

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have drawn on a macro policy analysis perspective to identify the broad environmental factors, influences and processes at the global and nation-state levels which account for the apparent convergence of education restructuring policies of devolution and community participation across western nations. While I recognise that pre-globalisation accounts of education policy borrowing occur between nations, I have located my analysis of education policy convergence within the context of the global economic crisis of the 1970s, increasing economic and political globalisation processes, the influence of transnational capital and transnational organisations, the emergence of neo-liberal ideology and the construction of a crisis of the Fordist Keynesian welfare state. Combined, these factors presented similar pressures confronting nation-states to reconfigure their role and to re-assess the purpose and provision of public education.

A central argument in this chapter is that, following the global economic crisis of the 1970s, economic and political globalisation processes intensified. These processes have broadened the area of economic and public policy determinants of nation-states to include the influence of transnational capital’s investment policies and decisions which are

oriented toward promoting international economic competitiveness. One central socio-economic change is the transformation of Fordism to a post-Fordist flexible accumulation paradigm dominated by requirements of transnational capital which require nation-states and their economies to be geared to flexible production and diversified consumption in a globally competitive economic environment.

Economic globalisation processes and neo-liberalism as hegemonic policy discourses have placed pressure on nation-states to reconfigure the purpose and provision of public education to ensure international competitiveness in the global economy. The influence of transnational organisations also needs to be taken into account in contemporary discussions of education policy convergence between nations. Transnational organisations such as the OECD have facilitated through their agenda-building activities a “new global educational policy consensus” (Lingard, 2000b, p. 84), which highlights the effects of the material and discursive aspects of economic globalisation and neo-liberalism. As illustrated, education policy discourses drawn on by successive Australian Federal Governments and other western countries to restructure public education reflect elements of an economic rationalist ideology, post-Fordist responses to globalisation, the reconstitution of human capital theory in education and new managerialism. The managerialist transformation of education systems has brought the incorporation of (post-Fordist) private sector management practices in the form of decentralised education systems which contain both centralising/decentralising tendencies. Furthermore a human capital view of education, which is a key feature of the new educational policy consensus, now underpins the purpose and function of public education systems.

While I have presented the factors and processes facilitating the convergence of education policies across western nations, I also introduce the notion of “vernacular globalization” (Lingard, 2000b, pp. 80-81) which challenges the deterministic and totalising view of the global spread of neo-liberal education policies. Policy convergence in relation to ideas about education reform and restructuring is recognised but, at the same time, the tensions between globalisation and localisation, and the diversity of national or local responses to these tensions, are emphasised.



# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S EDUCATION POLICIES**

### **1973-1998**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter I provide an overview of the major education policies pursued by successive Western Australian Governments in response to the pressures nationally and globally to reform public education. Particular attention is directed toward policies which promote devolution and community participation. In doing so, I note Ball's (1997, p. 266) observation that the "rampant ahistoricism" of much of the education policy research has constrained the nature of the understandings brought to contemporary education policies. As Kincheloe (1997, p. xxxvi) puts it, "when the past is forgotten its power over the present is hidden from view." With these concerns in mind, I use "storying policy" or "policy genealogy" (Gale, 2001, pp. 384-390) to examine the "lineage or lines of descent in our history" about devolution and community participation (Franklin, 1999, p. 350). While not offering a "specific formula or a set of steps to follow" (G. Anderson & Grinberg, 1998, p. 340), a policy genealogy critically questions how knowledge and discourses are constituted at any given time, and how and why these change (Gale, 2001; Pierre, 2000; Powers, 2002). This approach brings clarity to the present through the identification of the major influences on the development of discourses in a way that illuminates the relationship between power and knowledge (Best, 1995; Foucault, 1977; Fraser & Gordon, 1997; Mahon, 1992). Also, the "differences and discontinuities" (Franklin, 1999, p. 350) in discourses over time reveal how educational policy problems and solutions are constructed and read in a way that privileges particular interests and ideological positions. The value of this historical form of enquiry is that it challenges and problematises the idea that the dominant discourses and practices of devolution and community participation in the Western Australian education policies are "timeless, natural [and] unquestionable" (Rose, 1999, p. 20).

In keeping with the critical intent of genealogical inquiry the focus of this chapter is to deconstruct Western Australian education policies to illuminate the significance of the timing of the introduction of policies, the broader socio-economic and ideological

influences shaping the policies, and the different meanings applied to the discourses of devolution and community participation over time. This approach opens up possibilities to historically locate why and when the *LAEP* policy was introduced, to trace whether there is continuity/discontinuity in the dominant discourses about devolution and community participation, and to identify the form in which these manifest in the *LAEP* policy text. An examination of the effects of previous education policies in local educational sites also offers insights to help me understand both the conflicting interpretations of the *LAEP* policy text and the participants' stories about the contestation and resistance surrounding the enactment of *LAEP* that I discuss in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

The key policy documents discussed in this chapter include government legislation, government reviews, white papers, government departmental statements labelled as education policies, and departmental strategic planning documents that represent the state's authorised official talk (Apple, 1993; Codd, 1988; Taylor, 1997) about education at a particular point in time. While I recognise policy as authoritative statements contained in texts (Prunty, 1984), like Ball (1994a), I also regard policy as representing the processes leading to *fixing* the meaning of the texts as well as the ongoing resistances, negotiations and re-working over time of policy discourses in practice. It is this dynamic sense of policy as being in a continual "state of becoming" (Ball, 1994a, p. 16) that I want to portray in the following sections rather than policy as a reified textual "artefact" (Codd, 1988, p. 243).

To assist me to deconstruct the Western Australian education policies and reviews, I draw on the following ideas from the CPTF. At the macro structural level these ideas include:

- the way education restructuring policies such as devolution and community participation, pursued by the State reflect broader socio-economic, political and global influences; and
- the way the state draws on policy discourses of devolution and community participation to legitimate particular forms of conduct and participation while marginalising others.

At the middle-range level the theoretical ideas include:

- the different meanings applied to the discourses of devolution and community participation over time;

- the extent to which the playing out of global and national discourses in specific contexts is mediated by local histories, cultures and politics; and
- the way policy discourses of devolution and community participation are historically produced, interpreted and [re]constructed at the level of policy formulation and enactment by particular interest groups.

At the micro level of practice the organising ideas include:

- the extent to which the “readerly” and “writerly” (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12) nature of policies offers opportunities for individuals and groups to exercise effective agency and resistance throughout the policy process.

Initially I discuss the *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) policy that was initiated by the Whitlam Federal Labor Government. This policy set the scene for change in the provision of education and elevated devolution and community participation onto the political agendas of all Australian States.

## **DEVOLUTION: SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSES**

In December, 1972, after 23 years of Federal Liberal-Country Party Coalition Government, the Whitlam Labor Party (1972-1975) swept into power. The Whitlam Government saw education as a key to reduce inequalities based on socio-economic factors. One of its first actions was to form the Australian Schools Commission and to appoint an Interim Committee to report on the status and needs of schools in Australia. By May, 1973, the Committee had produced a report *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973).

### **Schools in Australia (1973)**

*Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) is often cited as a “landmark” document because it challenges the longstanding centralist bureaucratic tradition in Australian schooling and places devolution and community involvement in schools firmly on the political agenda at a national and state level (Hoffman, 1994, p. 12). *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) promotes devolution and community participation as part of a larger package of educationally motivated social democratic reforms in which schools and their communities are partners. In *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973), the case for a social democratic approach to devolution and community participation is expressed in the following way:

The Committee favours less rather than more centralised control over the operation of schools. Responsibility should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of the pupils whom they teach and, at the senior levels, with the students themselves ... this grass roots approach to the control of schools reflects a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out. (p.10)

Western Australia first experienced devolution and community participation policies when the Whitlam Federal Labor Government, via the Interim Committee of the Schools Commission, attempted to introduce these policies into all Australian State school systems.

### ***Retaining central control and the discourse of expert educators***

The Whitlam Government's devolution objective was advanced to the States through an *Innovations Program* which saw a massive increase in Federal funding available for innovative practice at the school level (Lingard et al., 1995, p. 87). One policy manoeuvre adopted was a shift to a regional office structure. In setting up the original 11 regions, Dr Mossenson, the Director-General of the Education Department of Western Australia, who was a strong defender of a centralised educational bureaucracy, made it clear that the control of all policy matters would be retained by the Central Office (Trestrail, 1992, p. 2). M. Angus (1995, p. 7) says that, in relation to Western Australia, the "school projects funded by the Innovations Program led to some system-wide policy changes .... but, institutionally, schools remained much the same and the central office continued as firmly in control as ever."

Up until the mid-1980s, the Education Department of Western Australia, as in many other Australian States, had a long tradition of centralist control through a rigid hierarchical "command system" (Cuttance et al., 1998, p. 145). Historically, the separation of political and administrative functions enshrined in the Westminster tradition meant that Ministers and politicians largely left educational policy decisions to the Director-General of Education and senior bureaucrats who were regarded as "experts" in their field (Smart, 1992, p. 43). This bureaucratic model was sustained through discourses that promoted the view that educational policy making should, as Reid (1998, p. 62) says, only "be the province of those with knowledge about, and experience of education." *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) challenged the centralised bureaucratic system and the

legitimacy of educational *experts* to exclusively determine what counts as knowledge about education policy. Social democratic discourses of participation and devolution position parents, students and community members, who have historically been at the margins of educational decision-making, as legitimate partners with educational experts in determining education policy directions. The resistance by senior bureaucrats to relinquishing power and control to local educational sites was so enduring (L. Angus, 1993) that relative to most of the other Australian States toward the end of the 1980s Western Australia was viewed as having one of the most centralised education administration systems (Smart & Alderson, 1980).

In 1983, some 14 years after the release of *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973), devolution and community participation in schooling was once again placed on the political agenda in Western Australia by the newly elected Burke Labor Government (1983-1988). The election of the Burke Government followed a period of almost unbroken Conservative Coalition Government rule since the 1950s during which time the highly centralised Western Australian education system experienced great stability. The Burke Government came into power with a “reformist zeal” (Goddard & Punch, 1996, p. 61) and, as part of its pre-election campaign, promised a far-ranging enquiry into education (Beazley, 1984, p. 1).

### **The Beazley Report (1984)**

Consistent with the pre-election priorities and a clear signal of the importance of the education portfolio to the Burke Government, the Government’s first initiative was to announce a Commission of Enquiry into Education (Burnside, 1992, p. 9). Mr Kim Beazley Senior (a former Federal Education Minister under the Whitlam Government) chaired the committee that produced a report titled *Education in Western Australia, Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education in Western Australia*, 1984 (hereafter *Beazley Report*, 1984).

Unlike *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973), which as Lingard et al. (2002, p. 10) say came at the “high point of the Keynesian social policies in Australia”, in the *Beazley Report* (Beazley, 1984) we see that the influence of the economic down-turn of the 1980s starts to permeate discourses about the purpose of public schooling in Western Australia. The impetus for this Commission of Inquiry was the Government’s concerns about the

relevance of the current schooling system given the shifting social, economic and technological changes. The Committee explains this in the following way:

In recent times, the community has been given repeated and stark reminders of the magnitude of the technological revolution and the degree to which it increasingly influences people's lives. Despite higher-than-ever standards of living for the majority of people, many thousands either have lost their jobs or are unable to obtain one. Many live in poverty and distress and the situation is most often serious for youth and particularly school-leavers. In these difficult circumstances, the community has become increasingly concerned about the relationships between schooling, employment and post-school life in general. (Beazley, 1984, p. 1)

Many of the two hundred and seventy-two recommendations made by the Committee (all of which the Burke Government was committed to implementing) attempted to draw together the relationship between secondary schooling, employment and post-school life.

### ***Participatory democracy discourses***

The *Beazley Report* (Beazley, 1984) presented devolution and community participation in school decision-making as a significant issue to be addressed. The Committee acknowledged that *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) and the recent policy trend in Australia and many western countries toward parent and community participation had influenced their deliberations (Beazley, 1984, p. 256). Drawing on *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973), the Committee argued for “community participation” rather than mere “involvement” in school decision-making and promoted a participatory democratic approach to devolution which it maintained would lead to more equitable and effective outcomes from schooling (Beazley, 1984, pp. 256-257). In an attempt to shift the balance between the centralisation and decentralisation of the administration system within the Education Department, the Committee recommended that the school and the community be partners in decision-making in areas such as school policy, staffing and the management of resources (Beazley, 1984, p. 257).

With its social democratic approach to devolution, the Committee advocated a bottom-up change process rather than imposing a generic model of devolution and community participation on schools. This approach acknowledged the diversity between schools and empowered individual school communities to develop models that reflected their local circumstances (Beazley, 1984, p. 267). To facilitate devolution, the Committee further

recommended that “guidelines on a range of models for involvement and community participation ... be prepared and made available to school communities” (p. 267) and “that the Western Australian Education Act and Regulations be reviewed in order that existing barriers to community participation in school based decision making be removed” (p. 277).

### ***Stalling devolution: Fighting for control***

In June, 1984, the Community Participation in Schooling Committee was formed for the purpose of implementing the *Beazley Report*'s (Beazley, 1984) recommendations in relation to community participation in school decision-making. A pilot project was initiated whereby 18 school communities would trial a range of decision-making models. In 1986, the Education Department terminated the project. No reason was made public. Goddard and Punch (1996) suggest that the devolution project was abandoned because:

... senior officials in the Western Australian Education Department [were divided] into two opposing groups. One was headed by the Director-General of Education at the time, while the other was an emerging group with an ideological affinity with the Minister for Education. The former group sought to stage the implementation of the proposed changes in a way which enabled control to remain with senior officers of the department .... the emerging group continued to argue for its radical views, seeking greater school, teacher and pupil control over the curriculum and its content .... this ‘stand-off’ was mainly a consequence of ideological differences. (p. 63)

With the Education Department's lack of commitment to community participation in school decision-making, much of the interest waned (Coffey, 1998). Towards the end of 1986, the Director-General resigned and, according to P. Wilson and Smart (1991, p. 265), this resignation was highly significant because it signalled a weakening of the influence of the position of Director-General. As Browning (2003) observes, the Directors-General of Education who followed did not appear to have the same level of power and control as their predecessors.

The *Beazley Report* (1984) has been criticised for being an “unwieldy” document “lacking a central philosophy and focus” (P. Wilson & Smart, 1991, p. 257). Down (1990, 1993) suggests that one of the strengths of the Report is that many of the reforms reflect traditional Labor values through promoting the principles of participation, choice, diversity and equality as part of a social justice strategy. At the same time as it contains a

social democratic agenda for public education, Down (1990, 1993) also observes that the Report reflects a growing global neo-liberal economic trend in education that was emerging in the late-1970s and 1980s. That is, while the democratic aims of education remain dominant, there are “signifiers or traces of economic rationalism and corporate managerialism” (Porter et al., 1993, p. 238) that can be detected in the text along with an emerging human capital view of the purpose of education. Therefore, rather than quality education being defined solely in terms of educational principles, quality is redefined so that the purpose of education is realigned to reflect the needs of the economy. According to this view, the role of schools is to develop the necessary skills and knowledge for economic growth (Down, 1994, p. 55).

While social democratic discourses clearly frame ideas about devolution and community participation in the *Beazley Report*, in a less dominant position in the text devolution is also linked to school accountability processes in the area of overall school and staff performance appraisal (Beazley, 1984, pp. 210-214, 274). While this is only an emerging discourse in the Report, Porter et al. (1993, p. 238) state that it may also be seen as “opening a small space on the field of possibilities” for the development of the new managerial imperative in future policy documents aimed at reforming the Education Department. It is these policy documents, with their emphasis on creating an efficient and effective decentralised educational bureaucracy, that I turn to now.

## **DEVOLUTION: CORPORATIST MANAGERIALIST DISCOURSES**

The re-election of the Burke Government in March, 1986, brought the beginning of hard-edged policy changes not only to the Education Department but to the public sector generally. As Porter et al. (1993) point out, the nature of the restructure of the Education Department needs to be understood as a part of the Burke Labor Government’s overall public sector reform strategy to reduce expenditure and increase organisational efficiencies. Initially, I discuss some of the broader contextual factors influencing the Western Australian Labor Government in the early-1980s, and then show how these shaped the nature of the discourses about public sector reform in Premier Burke’s *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) and, subsequently the education restructuring policies pursued by the Burke Government through *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987).



### **Premier Burke's White Paper (1986): Reforming the Public Sector**

Like many western governments in the 1980s, the Burke Government found itself in an environment of declining resources and an economy moving towards recession. The end of the post-war boom conditions meant a reduction of financial resources available to the States from the Federal Government along with a shrinking tax base (Soucek, 1992). High levels of youth unemployment (approximately 25 percent) (S. Robertson, 1993, p. 119) meant that more young people were staying on in the Western Australian upper secondary education system (Porter et al., 1993, p. 242). The Federal Government, while promoting the retention of students in Years 11 and 12 and a curriculum orientated toward vocational education, (a strategy aimed at developing a globally competitive and highly trained and skilled workforce) did not provide increased funding for State education. As S. Robertson (1993, p. 119) points out, these factors lead to a growing perception by Labor politicians that the State was facing a “fiscal and legitimacy crisis” and that “austere measures” were required to manage the Western Australian economy (Goddard & Punch, 1996, p. 64).

In June, 1983, as part of a programme of tough cost cutting measures to make up a \$274 million shortfall in the State budget, the Burke Government temporarily cut the salaries of politicians, senior public servants and school administrators, by two and fifteen percent (Burnside, 1992, p. 10). This dramatic action was a public relations triumph that focused attention on the economic plight of the State Government and foreshadowed a major restructure of the public service (Louden, 1988).

### ***Economic and managerialist reform discourses***

Within months of being re-elected in 1986, Premier Burke tabled his *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) in the Western Australian Parliament. The *White Paper* privileged economic rationalist and corporate managerialist discourses to guide public sector reform in the following way:

An overriding problem ... facing all Governments in the 1980s, [is] that new or expanded services required by the community can no longer be provided by simply extending the tax base .... this means that additional services must be funded both at the expense of other services and by improving efficiency in the delivery of continuing services ... all this spells change, especially government administration ... the work of the Functional Review Committee ... is intended to form a basis for rationalising the work of government,

improving its effectiveness and reducing inefficiency. (Burke, 1986, pp. 1, 22)

To legitimate the public sector reform discourse, the *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) emphasises that governments throughout the western world had been reforming their public sector. Federal and other State Government reports, such as *Reforming the Australian Public Service* (1983), the *Wilenski Report* (1977) in New South Wales, and the *Guerin Report* (1984) in South Australia, were cited to strengthen claims that public sector reform was required (Burke, 1986, pp. 3-4). In a similar vein to the Federal Government, the parameters for reform were embedded within an economic rationalist discourse whereby commonsense dictated that “change” was necessary and inevitable to achieve maximum effectiveness, flexibility and accountability within all public sector agencies (pp. 3-4). As Browning (2003, p. 127) states, this “bluntly ... meant ... achieving more for less.”

The introduction of corporate management structures was the strategy to achieve leaner more effective, efficient and accountable organisations. Within this context, devolution and the decentralisation of public sector agencies were also seen as management strategies to improve:

- responsiveness to local need;
  - public sector accountability; and
  - the capacity of public sector organizations to respond to change.
- (Burke, 1986, p. 7)

Part of this devolution package included the reduction of the size of central office agencies and the implementation of performance-orientated management structures and processes “to assess the efficiency and effectiveness with which organisational objectives are pursued” (Treasury of Western Australia cited in Trotman, 1996, p. 6).

The *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) is a significant policy document because it represents a “blueprint” for replacing the old bureaucratic model with corporate managerial structures (S. Robertson, 1993, p. 123). It also brings an economic rationalist ethos into the Western Australian public sector (Barcan, 2001; Trotman, 1996) that has endured well beyond the Burke Government’s period in office. Porter et al. (1993, p. 239) observe that the *White Paper* is a document that reveals the kind of tensions that the Labor Government and the State were confronting throughout the 1980s. These authors effectively see the

manoeuvre towards creating an “efficient corporate state” (p. 239) as a solution to the multiple demands brought about by simultaneously trying to facilitate the capital accumulation and legitimization processes in a period of declining economic resources.

The Burke Government privileged reform discourses that promoted devolution as part of a corporate managerialist strategy to increase accountability and economic efficiencies in the delivery of public sector services (Burke, 1986, pp. 3, 8, 21). Even though the *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) links devolution to the promotion of a self help ethos (rather than relying on the opinion of experts) and the need for greater participatory decision-making processes, these ideas, while compatible with a social democratic view of devolution, were in a residual position in the text relative to the corporate managerialist discourses. Consistent also with corporate managerialist restructuring discourses, the *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) clearly demarcates between Ministerial responsibility for policy formulation and that of public sector managers. As S. Robertson (1993, p. 123) says, this shift is significant because it legitimises Ministerial power to take on a more prescriptive and hands on approach to setting departmental direction and policies and sets in train greater “steerage capacity” for the state.

### **Functional Reviews of Education 1985 and 1986: Fast Tracking Reform**

While all public sector agencies were to be systematically reviewed by Premier Burke’s Functional Review Committee, in 1983 Minister Pearce volunteered the Education Department as an initial “target” for review (Trestrail, 1992, p. 4). P. Wilson and Smart (1991) believe that the Minister’s motivation was driven by his:

... conviction that the highly centralized Department of Education was cumbersome, inefficient and ripe for cost cutting economies at its Head Office level, he had no hesitation in offering up his department as one of the targets for the FRC. In doing so he hoped to overturn the established bureaucratic power structure within the organisation. (p. 258)

By December, 1986 the *Functional Review Report on the Department of Education: A Review of the Education Portfolio* (1986) (hereafter *Functional Review*) was completed. This Functional Review Committee’s report was a highly confidential document because it promoted far reaching changes to the structure and management of education. In particular, it recommended immediate implementation of cuts of \$30 million to the education budget (around 5 per cent) and proposed that an additional \$30 million would

be saved following the implementation of all of its recommendations (Goddard & Punch, 1996, p. 66). The Functional Review also claimed that the introduction of a Ministry structure would achieve a forty percent reduction in the number of senior administrative positions and save half a million dollars annually (A Review of the Education Portfolio cited in Coffey, 1998, p. 51). Coffey (1998) identifies that, similar to the *White Paper* (Burke, 1986), the rhetoric of corporate management and economic rationalist discourses are dominant in the text. These manifest in an emphasis on:

- fiscal restraint in the administration of education;
- the creation of a responsive and flexible administration of education;
- the flexible and accountable use of educational resources; and
- ongoing accountability to the Government and the community (pp. 50-52).

In October 1987, the *Functional Review* was given to a private, public relations/advertising agency, which, in consultation with Minister Pearce and the new Acting Director-General of Education, produced a slim eye-catching document titled *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) (Burnside, 1992; Coffey, 1998). According to Goddard and Punch (1996), *Better Schools* ultimately represents a policy settlement between the Minister for Education, the Premier and the Minister for Public Sector Management regarding the extent of the restructuring and rationalisation of services that should occur within the Education Department. This meant that “any reference to economic rationalization would be avoided, but the corporatist goals of effectiveness, efficiency and accountability would remain” (p. 66).

### **Better Schools (1987)**

Heavily influenced by the Premier’s *White Paper* (Burke, 1986) and the *Review of the Education Portfolio* (1986), *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) served as the blueprint for the structural reorganisation of the Head Office of the Education Department. In line with other public sector agency reforms driven by corporate managerial discourses, these changes were intended to render the education system, and especially schools, more flexible, responsive, accountable and efficient in the expenditure of public monies (Coffey, 1998). *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) frames the Education Minister’s justification for restructuring the Education Department as:

The emergence of new technologies, the desire for students to stay at school longer and the call for education to be more in touch with the

needs of the future have resulted in fundamental reconsiderations of the role of the school system. At the same time, the need for efficient use of Government resources has become more important than ever. Clearly, traditional methods of administration involving a high level of centralised staffing, overlapping of responsibilities and mechanisms for change which demand more and more funding, can't be justified. (p. 5)

A number of interesting discursive shifts emerge from the Minister's rationale for restructuring the education system, particularly when compared to the *Karmel Report* (Karmel, 1973) and the *Beazley Report* (Beazley, 1984). The Minister's arguments are embedded in a neo-liberal discourse of economic change where the *value for money argument* is used to justify education being restructured in line with the management and administrative techniques of the corporate world (Down, 1990). The call by the Minister for schools to be more "in touch with the needs of the future" (Pearce, 1987, p. 5) again reflects a neo-liberal economic discourse underpinned by the notion that the inevitable forces of technological change and economic globalisation require the reconsideration of the nature and provision of schooling. As Hoffman (1994) suggests, *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) can be seen as one response by the Western Australian Government to the global discourses driving the need for education reform.

### ***Self-determining schools for accountability***

In *Better Schools*, "self-determining schools" are identified as the centre-piece for structural reform (Pearce, 1987, p. 5). Devolving decision-making from the central bureaucracy to local schools is seen as the key to improve efficiency, effectiveness and to enable the education system to respond flexibly to community priorities. The strategies for facilitating devolution and school-based decision-making are:

- the provision of a school grant to give schools greater control over the expenditure of funds;
- the development of school based decision-making groups comprised of community representatives, staff, and parents and with student representation where appropriate; and
- the annual preparation of a school development plan to demonstrate accountability to the Ministry for Education against centrally developed performance indicators (Pearce, 1987, p. 7).

The other major recommendation supporting the move to a more decentralised system is the establishment of a school district structure to replace the old regions. The district would provide the link between schools and the Ministry and would be responsible for ensuring that “educational standards and policy goals are being met” (Pearce, 1987, p. 15). The role of the Ministry of Education is redefined as “monitoring and evaluating goals and standards across the system” and “ensuring comparability and equity of education” (Pearce, 1987, p. 17). The central office role is now essentially reoriented towards policy formulation and quality control, and the external audit of both financial and educational factors to monitor school performance (Pearce, 1987, p. 5). This new “self management” role for schools was to be phased in by 1992 (Pearce, 1987, pp. 23-25).

### ***Contesting, resisting and re-negotiating Better Schools***

The release of the *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) reforms was far from straight forward. While the nature of the reforms was met with scepticism, anger and resistance from various interest groups, Education Minister Pearce reports having been “stunned” by the negative reactions to *Better Schools* (Pearce cited in Porter et al., 1993, pp. 249). The resistance to the enactment of *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) and the policy settlements reached by the various interest groups reflect some of Ball’s ideas about policy in practice. In particular, Ball (1994a) says that policy is:

... an ‘economy of power’, a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings. Policy is both text and actions, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended ... Policies are always incomplete insofar as they relate to or map on to the ‘wild profusion’ of local practice ... Policy *as* practice is ‘created’ in a trialectic of dominance, resistance and chaos/freedom. Thus, policy is no simple asymmetry of power: ‘Control [or dominance] can never be totally secured, in part because of agency. It will be open to erosion and undercutting by the action, embodied agency of those people who are its object’. (pp. 10-11)

The Minister for Education saw *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) as containing a single authoritative meaning (Pearce cited in Porter et al., 1993, p. 249-250). In contrast, Chadbourne (1990) explains that *Better Schools* was read very differently by interest groups and took on a different meaning than that intended by the authors:

When the Better Schools Report was released, many people in the education system felt ambushed and violated. They accused the

management of hatching the Report in secrecy ... while teachers were away on Christmas holidays .... school staff were incensed by what they saw as the politicalisation and corporatisation of their system, the hypocrisy of introducing bottom up reforms by top down edicts, and the imposition of new duties without the provision of adequate resources. (p. 59)

The failure of the Ministry of Education to consult with and convince teachers of the viability of devolution, and to address their concerns about *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) resulted in the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia (hereafter SSTUWA) mounting a protracted campaign that fervently opposed the implementation of *Better Schools*. The SSTUWA's initial opposition to *Better Schools* related to a strongly held view that the management changes to devolution or self managing schools were essentially economic rationalisation in another form (Goddard & Punch, 1996; S. Robertson, 1993). Many teachers were also concerned that in practice *Better Schools* would lead to the intensification of their labour and the imposition of greater accountability mechanisms over their work by the Ministry of Education (O'Brien & Down, 2002).

Following considerable pressure by the SSTUWA to slow down the implementation of *Better Schools* and the placement of bans on teachers' work, the Minister for Education finally agreed to a moratorium on the implementation of the *Better Schools* reforms (S. Robertson, 1993). The failure of Minister Pearce to contain the industrial action finally led to Dr Carmen Lawrence taking over the education portfolio. However, this was not sufficient for the conflict to abate and 1989 was marked by a period of industrial action and in July the first general teachers' strike over a salary claim. Principals and students showed their support for the teachers by participating in the strike action (M. Angus, 1995). As S. Robertson (1993, pp. 125-127) points out, it was the first salary strike by teachers in 69 years.

### ***Reaching a policy settlement: Marginalising the community voice***

In April, 1990, a *Memorandum of Agreement between the Ministry of Education and the State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia* (Ministry of Education, 1990a) (hereafter *Memorandum of Agreement*) was signed. The agreement reached was that teachers' salaries and working conditions would be improved on the basis that the SSTUWA recognised and proceeded with the objective of devolution (S. Robertson, 1993). This *Memorandum of Agreement* also guaranteed the SSTUWA participation in

the management of the implementation of the reforms and ensured a more extensive role and representation for the Union in Ministry of Education policy making (M. Angus, 1991).

While the SSTUWA agreed to the implementation of *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) under the conditions of the *Memorandum of Agreement* (Ministry of Education, 1990a), there was reluctance for this to be extended to a tripartite arrangement to involve the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations (hereafter WACSSO) in negotiations. The focus of the SSTUWA upon industrial issues, which included the protection and betterment of teachers' working conditions, ensured WACSSO continued to be precluded from these negotiations (Coffey, 1998). The award restructuring process which ensued from the *Memorandum of Agreement* (Ministry of Education, 1990a) defined key interest groups as the Ministry of Education and the SSTUWA. Thus, parent and professional associations such as WACSSO were excluded from the bargaining process, effectively diminishing their status as legitimate participants in a devolved education system (M. Angus, 1991, p. 82).

As part of reaching a settlement through the *Memorandum of Agreement* (Ministry of Education, 1990a) process, the SSTUWA and the Ministry of Education further alienated the parent representative bodies by diminishing their role on School Based Decision Making Groups (hereafter SBDMGs). *Better Schools* had profiled the responsibilities of SBDMGs as "participating in defining the role of the principal and advising on selection and appointment of the principal" (Pearce, 1987, p. 11). The SSTUWA, however, objected to this reform and eventually this role for SBDMGs was removed as part of the *Memorandum of Agreement* (Coffey, 1998, p. 11). Western Australian parent groups were outraged when it became clear that the ground rules had changed significantly to the extent that the *Memorandum of Agreement* called for:

Regulations for decision-making groups [to] establish the nature of appropriate involvement of parent and community representatives. Limits will be specified to ensure that decision-making related to implementation of the curriculum, and the management of operations of the school are the province of professional staff. (Ministry of Education, 1990a, p. 123)

When these regulations were produced in a final policy statement titled *School Decision Making: Policy and Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 1990b), it was clear that the role of parents in the process was vastly diminished than *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) had



intended. For example, there was no reference to the role of SBDMGs in defining the role of the Principal and advising on the selection and appointment of the Principal (Ministry of Education, 1990b, pp. 3-5).

To ensure support for and the implementation of the Ministry of Education's *School Decision Making: Policy and Guidelines* (Ministry of Education, 1990b), the Minister for Education proposed that the *Education Act Amendment*, Section 23 (2) be repealed (Burnside, 1992). An amendment to the *Education Act* had been introduced by the previous Minister for Education in 1988 as an initial move toward formalising the role of parent and community participation in education policy development and school decision-making. Despite WACSSO's intense opposition to the repeal of Section 23 (2) of the *Education Act Amendment*, the relevant Section of the *Education Act* was amended to "a school decision-making group shall not exercise any authority over the staff, or interfere in any way with the control or management of any school" (The Education Act cited in The West Australian Parent and Citizen, 1990, p. 7).

WACSSO representatives interpreted the amendments as meaning that parents and community members were no longer to be decision-makers in partnership with teachers and students, but to be relegated once again to the traditional fund-raising role (McKimmie, 1990). Some parents considered that the school councils would become rubber stamps for principals, particularly in relation to school development plans (Chadbourne, 1991).

Three years after the release of *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987), a period which had been characterised by considerable contestation, resistance and renegotiation of the detail of *Better Schools*, the following areas were being implemented:

- a significant restructuring of central and district offices although not as great a reduction as intended;
- the passage of legislation enabling school-based decision-making groups to operate [with less power than originally proposed, hence the removal of SBDMGs in staff selection];
- the issuance of school development plan guidelines and work by many schools on theirs;
- the consolidation of school funding into a single grant with phasing in;

- the slow development of the superintendents' role as an auditing agent due to the fact that the means of accounting for schools' performance have not yet been developed; [and]
- the withdrawal by the government of the notion of local staff selection due to strong Teachers Union opposition. (Porter et al., 1993, p. 253)

The reforms proposed in *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) have been described by M. Angus (1995, p. 8) as “the most radical this century.” While foreshadowed in the *Beazley Report* (Beazley, 1984), it is in *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) that economic rationalist and corporate managerial discourses begin to dominate Western Australian education policy. While the finer details of this policy shift in *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) are particular to the Western Australian context, this policy manoeuvre reflects restructuring efforts around the world that sought to reform inefficient, out-moded educational bureaucracies into efficient corporate entities (Blackmore, 1993, 1998; Lawton, 1992; Whitty et al., 1998).

Unlike the social democratic view of devolution in *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) and the *Beazley Report* (Beazley, 1984), in *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) it is the corporatist managerial view of devolution and community participation with its emphasis on bureaucratic restructuring and accountability mechanisms that dominates the text. Coffey (1998) encapsulates how the dominance of the corporatist managerial discourses of devolution play out in practice relative to a social democratic perspective:

In *Better Schools*, the concerns for efficiency and effectiveness led to the concept of devolution being more akin to decentralisation of administrative responsibility and accountability in contrast to a genuine delegation of power ... the mechanisms employed in order to increase community participation emanated from a corporate management ideology and not from one committed to participatory democracy. Thus the structures and means by which they were established reflected the dominant values of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability rather than a concern for democratic participation .... the devolution process provides an important cog in the accountability process of the schools to the Government .... genuine democratic participation is incompatible with corporate management where SBDMGs, for example, form part of the accountability framework rather than one of autonomous policy development. (pp. 10, 67-68, 167)

The corporate managerial view of devolution in *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) brings with it tensions and paradoxes. In *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987), the social democratic

discourses of local participation, democracy and self-determination are appropriated to support a top-down centralist policy to increase the accountability of schools to the central office (S. Robertson, 1993). While SBDMGs are promoted as a strategy for local decision-making groups, the requirements of strategic planning and performance monitoring and appraisal superimpose very tight measures of accountability to the central office. Parents who are encouraged under the guise of participation and the development of partnerships with schools become agents not only in the implementation of central government policies but also in meeting accountability requirements (L. Angus, 1993; Trotman, 1996). This simultaneous and contradictory “centralising/decentralising” (Lingard, 1996, p. 73) tendency, which characterises the relationship between the central office and local sites, is seen as the state “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135).

The main structures and processes to produce this management relationship between the Head Office and the local educational sites were effectively set in place via *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) through what M. Angus (1990) describes as a “means and ends” devolution paradigm that included:

- a clear articulation by the Central Office of the desired outcomes [for schools];
- the provision of resources to school decision-making groups in order to achieve the stated outcomes;
- empowerment of school decision-making groups to determine how to achieve the outcomes; and
- the accounting by schools of progress towards the achievement of the agreed outcomes. (p. 3)

Performance indicators, guidelines for expenditure of a school grant, and mandatory school development plans become means by which the Ministry of Education’s Central Office could monitor schools (Coffey, 1998, p. 72).

## **DEVOLUTION: MARKET DISCOURSES**

On February 6, 1993, the Court (1993-2001) Liberal/National Coalition Government (hereafter Coalition Government) won office in Western Australia. The new Minister for Education, Mr Moore, declared his intention to retain strong ministerial control over education as well as his commitment to achieve progress on devolution initiated in 1987 through *Better Schools* (Coffey, 1998; Trotman, 1996). Once again, parent and

community participation in school decision-making, along with the creation of a more efficient and effective educational bureaucracy, emerged as priorities on the Government's political agenda. However, in the following policy documents, the Court Coalition Government embraces a neo-liberal ideology by not only linking devolution and community participation to the continuing corporatisation of education but also by introducing market values into schools.

### **Devolution: The Next Phase (1993)**

In May, 1993, prior to being endorsed by Minister Moore, an unauthorised version of *Devolution: The Next Phase* (Ministry of Education, 1993) was leaked to the media from the Ministry of Education (Hayward, 1994; Hoffman, 1994). This discussion paper built upon *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) and promoted devolution and a role for local SBDMGs in the selection of the school principal and teachers (Hayward, 1994, p. 32). Whilst the discussion document indicated that no changes would occur until consideration of the proposals by parents and staff, the SSTUWA, incensed by the lack of consultation in the formulation of the document, called for the Minister to withdraw it (Hayward, 1994). The SSTUWA also reacted to the corporatist managerialist and economic rationalist discourses in the policy text. As Browning (2003, p. 174) points out, schools were described as management "units" (rather than educational sites) where economic gains through restructuring initiatives were emphasised rather than educational outcomes for students.

Concerned about the adverse comments in the media and the strength of the SSTUWA's reaction to *Devolution: The Next Phase* (Ministry of Education, 1993), on June 10, 1993, the Ministry of Education (Hoffman, 1994, p. 10) released a second document, *Devolution: The Next Phase: How Far Should We Go?* Signed by both the Minister and the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Education, this document, while not differing greatly from its predecessor, specifically linked devolution to:

- five year contracts for principals;
- principals' positions to be filled by open advertisement and then selected by the school community;
- hiring and firing of and transfer of all classroom teachers to be handed over to the school community (in effect, putting all teachers on temporary contract);
- setting of fees by the school;

- more flexible Duties Other Than Teaching (DOTT) Time;
- more flexible class sizes;
- more flexible working day; and
- a reduction in funded professional development days. (Hayward, 1994, p. 32)

The release of this document prompted a vociferous response from the SSTUWA, which again claimed that devolution was an exercise in economic rationalism. The SSTUWA position was further inflamed by Minister Moore's comments in *The West Australian* newspaper that the "moves were designed to save money" (*The West Australian* cited in Hayward, 1994, p. 32). The SSTUWA's other key objections to the proposed reforms included the lack of adherence to the agreed consultation process in the preparation of the document and the potential for the wider community to determine the working conditions of SSTUWA members (State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 1993, p. 247)

The linking of devolution to the deregulation of industrial matters in schools, as well as the provision for parents to determine industrial matters in schools through their role on SBDMGs, resulted in a very strong signal from the SSTUWA that devolution in this form may have progressed as far as it should go (State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia, 1993, p. 247). The SSTUWA directed its members to join a Labour Council 24 hour "stop-work" strike on June 17, 1993 (Hayward, 1994, p. 32). While the Minister for Education temporarily placed on hold the issue of making progress on devolution and community participation, other reviews of the education portfolio were achieved. These reviews introduced a market view of devolution (Rizvi, 1994) by placing issues of deregulation, competition and choice firmly on the educational reform agenda. It is in the *Review of Education and Training* (Vickery, 1993) that we see these educational restructuring discourses emerge.

### **The Vickery Report (1993)**

In July, 1993, the *Review of Education and Training* (hereafter *Vickery Report*) was released. The Minister's Review Committee comprised four members including Dr Vickery (a former Director-General of Education) and, interestingly, Mr Ian Williams, of Hamersley Iron, who represented industry interests. The *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993) was embarked upon at the same time as the Coalition Government was reviewing the Western Australian public sector, a review that would culminate in the *Agenda for*

*Reform: Report of the Independent Commission to Review Public Sector Finances (Vol One and Two)* (McCarrey, 1993a, 1993b) (hereafter *Volume One* and *Volume Two*). The close proximity of *Volume One* and *Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993a, 1993b) is significant because they were produced in the initial period of the Coalition Government's first term in office, clearly signalling the intended direction for public sector policy generally and, in particular, for education.

The *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993) was the Coalition Government's response to its election promises to improve public service efficiency and effectiveness. In the Executive Summary of the *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993), the drivers for the review of education are identified as an expected "mini-boom" in education and training by the mid-1990s due to rising retention rates in Years 11 and 12 and an escalating demand from school leavers and adults for TAFE and higher education courses. The Report claims the review responds to the "increasing demand for education and training [which] will occur in a period of rapid social, economic and technological change .... schools will increasingly have to function within a rapidly changing society" (Vickery, 1993, pp. v-vi).

In the *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993), the drive for economic efficiency dominates the educational reform agenda. Despite commenting upon inadequate funding for education, the recommendations examine ways for education training institutions to maintain the same level of outputs/outcomes at reduced costs through linking devolution to resource management at the school level. In the section on the *Reform of School Management*, the Committee advocates devolution and "self-managing schools" on the basis that this is in keeping with the "world-wide orthodoxy of corporate management for public sector organizations" (Vickery, 1993, p. 24). The Committee further argues that "these reforms have been commonly based on private business sector management trends ... [and] experience has shown that business improvement is most successful" (Vickery, 1993, p. 24). The Committee recommends that the progressive management of resources be devolved to schools and the local community through local school decision-making groups. Other recommendations are made in regard to the effective utilisation of staff and facilities as a means of reducing expenditure in schools (pp. 27-28). The Committee also drew strong links between local management structures and increasing the accountability of schools by emphasising devolution as a strategy for the Chief Executive Officer to maintain accountability to the Minister for Education (p. 26).

The *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993) promotes a human capital view of education in Western Australia and assumes that government-provided education should reflect the needs of the state and, in particular, the state's micro economic reform agenda. The Committee recommends shifting to a vocation based curriculum in schools and advocates an increase in funding in this area to provide greater employment opportunities for the non-academic students. The privileging of a vocational discourse directly links schools to economic restructuring, where education is provided in a most effective way to equip students with the *right* vocational skills and knowledge that are transferable to the workplace. This emphasis also shows the close relationship developing between schooling and business interests (Taylor et al., 1997).

With the discourses of corporate managerialism and a human capital view of education clearly dominating the text, there is no evidence of the rhetoric of a social democratic agenda for devolution or community participation in schools. Furthermore, educational inequality, a focus of the earlier decade, is also clearly displaced as a central concern of the Coalition Government.

### **The McCarrey Reports Volumes One and Two (1993)**

The first volume of the *McCarrey Report* (McCarrey, 1993a), which was released alongside the *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993), focuses on ways to improve the expenditure of public monies through increased efficiency and effectiveness in the function and provision of public services. In *Volume One*, the economic imperative driving the Commission's approach is clearly stated. The "deterioration in the State's financial position" which requires that the public sector be "urgently" reformed by using "modern management procedures in line with changes instituted by the private sector" (McCarrey, 1993a, pp. v-vi) is the purpose of the review. *Volume One* also introduces New Right themes of deregulation and the privatisation of public services and discusses the role of market forces in the determination of the price and quality of public services. While *Volume One* (McCarrey, 1993a) contains many generalisations, *Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993b) makes explicit recommendations on ways to reduce expenditure and to improve efficiency and effectiveness across a number of government departments and agencies. The limited section of the Report, which deals with education, explores ways to reduce costs rather than address educational outcomes and processes for students.

The *McCarrey Report, Volume Two*, draws upon the *Vickery Report* (Vickery, 1993) to support many of its recommendations regarding the education portfolio. Both Committees had common membership and, like other public sector agencies, viewed education as an industry. The McCarrey Committee also draws heavily on *Devolution: the Next Phase* (Ministry of Education, 1993) and recommends reducing costs and developing efficiencies in schools through improving the efficiency and effectiveness of teachers and administrators (McCarrey, 1993b, pp. 229-236).

Devolution is treated in *Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993b) as an administrative strategy to improve efficiencies, accountability and productivity across all public sector agencies (p. 224). The Committee also argues that the education bureaucracy continues to rely on Central Office management and recommends a restructuring of management functions to devolve many of these Central Office functions to districts and schools as a means to generate savings (McCarrey, 1993b, p. xxxviii).

### ***Parent voice through parent choice***

While corporate managerialist and economic rationalist discourses clearly dominate, a discursive shift occurs in the *McCarrey Report Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993b) where the Committee examines the viability of the tendering (or out-sourcing) of human services within the Central Office of the Ministry for Education (p. 242). The Report also recommends tendering out school cleaning, gardening, bus services and curriculum development (p. 229). The proposal to deregulate some educational management functions and services signalled the introduction of a neo-liberal market driven economic strategy by the Coalition Government. A market ideology also permeated the Committee's view of devolution and community participation in schools. The Committee implies in one section of the Report that school boundaries should be deregulated to enhance educational choice for parents and the community (p. 224). The reduction of central control forms part of a market view of devolution whereby education is viewed as a marketable service where schools are in competition with each other for clients (or market share). As Hoffman (1994) explains:

Proponents of this view argue that the action of a competitive free market on schools leads to significant efficiency and effectiveness gains .... schools must be able to adapt to the forces of choice within the marketplace in the way that businesses have to in the private sector



.... for schools to be able to respond quickly to market forces ... they need to be as autonomous as possible. (p. 14)

Within this market view of devolution, the powerful rhetoric of consumer choice is introduced into education policy. The removal of bureaucratic constraints on personal freedom underpins the notion that parents, as consumers and players in an educational market-place, can make “strategic choices” about their schooling needs based on the performances of schools (McCarrey, 1993b, p. 240). This approach implies that the more “efficiently managed and entrepreneurial schools” are likely to be viewed as “successful” within the neo-liberal paradigm (L. Angus, 1993, p. 15).

### ***Creating competition***

While the McCarrey Committee made recommendations regarding ways of rationalising services within the central Education Department and schools, it also turned its attention to rationalising economically unviable schools in Western Australia. In a section titled *Infrastructure*, the Committee states:

It will be necessary to close some schools .... the rationalization of schools should be a continuing process .... it should be noted that the previous policy on school rationalization has not been implemented over the past four years and an inevitable backlog exists .... a review of the situation has revealed that about 50 schools ... may need to be closed .... amalgamations of junior and senior campuses may be possible. (McCarrey, 1993b, pp. 229-231)

The Committee explicitly states that there needs to be a clearly defined criteria and an “appropriate model for rationalization of schools to achieve optimal size, curriculum breadth, and staffing” (p. xxxviii). At the same time as it suggests that the local community needs to agree to the closure of a particular school, the Report is pre-emptive when it states that, based on efficiency and cost saving criteria, the:

... closure of about 50 schools is justified in the interests of more efficient provision of education. This action should realize recurrent savings of \$8 million and a capital realization of around \$50 million. (McCarrey, 1993b, p. 231)

In 1994, the Ministry of Education’s *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ministry of Education, 1994) took effect (see page 154). This programme was superseded in 1997 by the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) which is the focus of the critical ethnographic study in this thesis.

The *McCarrey Report Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993b) is fundamental for tracing the policy genealogy of education policy in Western Australia. In particular, it signals a discursive shift in the Coalition Government's discourses driving devolution and community participation. While a corporate managerialist perspective retains a dominant position in the text, a market discourse of devolution and community participation also informs education policy. From this perspective, participation is reduced to parents exercising choice in their decision-making about the nature and type of schooling they require for their children. Furthermore, the identity of parents is redefined in the text from the social democratic notion of partners in decision-making to that of consumers making strategic choices in a deregulated, rationalised public educational market-place in Western Australia. Needless to say, this construction of parents in a devolved education system is far removed from the ideas advanced in the *Karmel Report* (Karmel, 1973), the *Beazley Report* (Beazley, 1984) and even *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987).

### **The Hoffman Report (1994)**

In 1994, the Minister for Education, Mr Moore, established a nine member panel - the Ministerial Independent Assessment Group (Devolution) - to review the impact of *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) and to recommend ways to progress devolution within Western Australian education. The Committee, which reported directly to the Minister, comprised ministerial nominees rather than representatives of interest groups. Cuttance et al. (1998, p. 147) maintain that the Minister commissioned the review of devolution as part of a public relations exercise to "gain time and to dampen a very heated public debate about progress on, and the virtues of the now 6-years-old Better Schools programme implementation." In acknowledging the problematic and contested nature of devolution in Western Australia, the Committee also states that it was conducting the review in a climate where "the proposition that devolution be further advanced was being treated with suspicion and distrust" (Hoffman, 1994, p. 10). Given this context, the Committee's task was seen to be the re-establishment of some boundaries in relation to the implementation of devolution and the enhancement of educational effectiveness, flexibility and responsiveness, as intended in *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987). As Bryant (2003, p. 80) observes, the Committee was required to "ensure that the government was getting value for money ... it was a push for accountability and efficiency."

The *Devolution of Decision-Making Authority in the Government School System of Western Australia* (Hoffman, 1994) (hereafter *Hoffman Report*) dedicates considerable space to clarifying the philosophical approaches to devolution and acknowledges that the term had been “badly battered” in an “undeclared semantic war” between proponents of differing views (Hoffman, 1994, p. 11). This, the Report added, went some way to explaining why devolution policies had been resisted and contested in Western Australia (p. 12). The Committee concludes that, by 1994, devolution in the Western Australian education system had taken on an administrative or a corporate managerial form. What this meant was that, while devolution had brought about a change in the relationship between the Ministry of Education and local educational sites, schools continued to operate within a framework of legislation, policies and priorities determined by the central authority that gave the State greater steerage of local sites from a distance.

### ***Community participation for accountability***

The Committee made 25 recommendations, many of which have been implemented. The key recommendations contained in the *Hoffman Report* (Hoffman, 1994) that are relevant to devolution and community participation include:

- the introduction of teacher performance management;
- the annual reporting by a School Board of a school’s performance through a school development plan;
- the accountability of a School Board to the Director-General of Education for the effectiveness and efficiency of the school;
- the enhancement of the powers for School Boards to enable their stronger involvement in the selection of the school principal. Also parents/community representatives are to constitute a majority of members of School Boards;
- the development of an outcomes based curriculum framework; and
- the extending of public reporting to include all of the performance indicators attached to the Education Department’s *Statement of Ethos and Purpose* (1991) (pp. ix-xv).

Requirements for clear accountability guidelines and mechanisms, which linked accountability processes for schools from the classroom teaching and learning process to the Director-General, accompanied many of the Committee’s recommendations. In this regard, the *Hoffman Report* (Hoffman, 1994) attempts to bed down devolution in terms of

the managerial and accountability aspects of education, specifically in relation to decision-making, planning, performance management, regulatory frameworks and budgets. Above all, accountability was promoted by the Committee as the central issue for Western Australian schools to address in the mid-1990s (Cuttance et al., 1998).

In response to the requirements for accountability structures, SSTUWA bans were placed on teachers' attendance at, or involvement in, any EDWA centrally imposed accountability processes for schools (Cuttance et al., 1998, p. 147) culminating in a state-wide strike in late 1995. Unlike the industrial action taken by principals against the *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) reforms in 1989, both the primary and secondary school principals' professional associations distanced themselves from the SSTUWA and the industrial action. The principals' action was in return for a 20 percent pay rise, which they reached through an enterprise agreement with EDWA in late 1995 (Cuttance et al., 1998, p. 147) that included the condition that the implementation of all EDWA accountability policies be continued. With many school principals no longer SSTUWA members, EDWA's political manoeuvre served to strengthen the EDWA corporate executive's power while weakening the SSTUWA's bargaining position. The SSTUWA's continued bans on its members' participation in EDWA's accountability requirements throughout 1996 and 1997 had a mixed influence on schools. As Cuttance et al. (1998, p. 147) contend, the bans "appear to [have] been more of a nuisance than a barrier to effective control of accountability policy and practice by the corporate executive of EDWA."

### ***Participation redefined as consumer choice***

While the *Hoffman Report* (Hoffman, 1994) discusses the social democratic view of devolution, it clearly locates parent participation in school decision-making within a corporate managerial and market view of devolution (Rizvi, 1994). Through SBDMGs or School Councils, parents become part of an accountability mechanism for ensuring centrally determined standards and efficiency requirements are met. Like the *McCarrey Report Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993b), the *Hoffman Report* (Hoffman, 1994) introduces the deregulation of school boundaries as a central component of school-based autonomy. The Committee also promotes what Ball refers to as "the terrors of performance and efficiency – performativity" (Ball, 1998c, p. 190) whereby schools are required to provide data that shows "absolute performance in achievement of expected student outcomes; performance relative to previous performance; and performance relative to the

performance of similar schools” (Hoffman, 1994, p. 79). As Lingard et al. (2002) suggest, these versions of school choice policies reflect another dimension of market devolution, which is based on the assumption that a competitive educational market will lead to improved student outcomes and more effective schools from which parents, as consumers, can choose the best educational services. These neo-liberal economic principles of deregulation, competition and choice, which underpin the notion of self-determining schools as proposed in the *Hoffman Report* (Hoffman, 1994), implicitly promote the following propositions about how schools in Western Australia should operate:

- that schools compete with one another for clients;
- that schools must be able to adapt to the forces of choice within the market-place in the way that businesses have to in the private sector;
- that the action of a competitive free-market on schools will lead to significant efficiency and effectiveness gains whereby schools have the option of either improving or going out of business; and
- that devolution essentially offers the option for schools to respond quickly to market forces.

### **The School Rationalisation Policy (1994)**

In 1994, the same time as the Ministerial Independent Assessment Group (Devolution) was deliberating on issues relating to devolution and community participation in public education, the Ministry of Education, in line with the recommendations from the *McCarrey Report, Volume Two* (McCarrey, 1993b), initiated the *School Rationalisation Programme* 1994-1996 (Ministry of Education, 1994). The aim of the programme was to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the provision of public educational services by “enabling surplus capital assets and surplus recurrent expenditures to be liberated and redirected to other needs within the education system” (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 5). Parents of students attending the schools under review were given a vote to determine whether their school would close. A majority vote opposing a school closure ended the consideration of that specific school for closure by the State Government (Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 10).

While the Ministry of Education had assessed 77 schools as meeting the criteria for closure, the implementation of *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ministry of

Education, 1994) eventuated in only 11 school closures (Auditor General of Western Australia, 1998, p. 35). As discussed in Chapter One, the *School Rationalisation Programme* was regarded by the Ministry of Education and the Auditor General as unsuccessful because it did not achieve the set targets for school closures, it divided schools and the community and it was viewed by many parents and teachers as an exercise in economic rationalisation.

Another policy supporting the *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ministry of Education, 1994) was EDWA's *Excision Policy* (Education Department of Western Australia cited in Trotman, 1996, p. 7) whereby schools could sell excess land or buildings and retain 50-70 percent of the proceeds to buy equipment and to upgrade buildings. At the time of the introduction of the *Excision Policy*, Chadbourne (cited in Trotman, 1996, p. 7) warned that the extension of this market ideology represented "privatization by stealth" within the state's public education system.

### ***Economic discourses and the public good***

The *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ministry of Education, 1994) and the *Excision Policy* (EDWA cited in Trotman, 1996, p. 7) reflect an entrepreneurial government preoccupied with economic efficiency and a market reform agenda for meeting educational demands in which state education as a public good is redefined. Both policies evince a shift from the social democratic notion of education as a public good based on concerns for both the social and economic value of public assets, to downsizing or selling community owned assets as a means to reduce the non-commercial budget deficit in areas such as the education portfolio. This approach is underpinned by the neo-liberal economic discourses that promote the view that the common good is unproblematically served by policies facilitating greater cost controls, value for money, greater accountability and resource management, which help governments achieve more for less (Reid, 2002).

The incorporation of community participation in the *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ministry of Education, 1994) as an expression of a democratic participation in decision-making is contradictory. The policy was not only determined centrally without public consultation but, also, the number of schools targeted for closure was pre-determined based on an efficiency criteria developed within the Ministry of Education Central Office. The incorporation of community participation can be seen as a

citizen legitimisation strategy (Hancock, 1999) on the part of the state designed to reduce conflict by co-opting parents to publicly legitimise the selling-off and rationalisation of community owned assets. Thus, the social democratic rhetoric of participatory decision-making is replaced by the corporate managerialist strategy of “managed participation” (Rizvi, 1994, p. 3) at the local level to achieve centrally determined goals. Within this corporate managerialist and market view of devolution, the nature of community participation in the *School Rationalisation Programme* (Ministry of Education, 1994) is justified on the basis that the longer-term goals of providing consumer choice through increasing competition and school choice policies empower parents and the community in education decision-making processes.

### **Local Area Education Planning Framework (1997)**

In July, 1997, the Western Australian Government introduced the *Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000* (EDWA, 1997d) (hereafter *Plan*). The *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) foreshadowed the release of the new *School Education Act* (1999) and provisions for the formation of bodies, such as school councils, who were to become the interface between the self-managing school and the community in a decentralised public education system. The *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) is identified as a key strategy in the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) for meeting the educational needs of all children through planning to use educational resources more effectively and efficiently.

In 2009 the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) remains the Western Australian Government’s most recent education policy and planning process for restructuring public education across the state. While the *LAEP Framework* (1997a) outlines a planning process for reviewing public education across educational districts, the accompanying documents, *Local Area Planning Framework Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b) (hereafter *Resource File*) [developed to assist the Central Office to support sections of EDWA with *LAEP*]; the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d); and the *Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000* (Brochure) (EDWA, 1997e) (hereafter *Brochure*) also provide important insights into public education reform in Western Australia. These documents collectively constitute “policy ensembles” (Ball, 1993, p. 14) and need to be read in relation to each other to illuminate the various discourses informing education reform, devolution and community participation. These policy documents are also significant texts in the context of this thesis because they were made available by EDWA to the *LAEP* representatives

and, throughout the interview process, many of the participants referred to one or all of them as representing authoritative statements about community participation in *LAEP*.

The *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d), is essentially the Government's vision statement for the Western Australian state education system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The *Future Directions* outlined in the policy aim to "enhance the delivery of education" to Western Australian students through restructuring public education (EDWA, 1997d, p. 17). *LAEP* is identified as one of six *Improvement Initiatives* aimed at improving outcomes for all students through reforming operational and school planning (EDWA, 1997e, p. 3). The *LAEP Framework*, which also engages parents and community members in planning for local educational service provision, is promoted in the *Brochure* as a strategy to better identify local educational needs and to improve the delivery of curriculum and resources at the school level (EDWA, 1997e, pp. 2-3). As discussed in Chapter Seven, it is through these policy documents that we see an interaction between the global and the local policy contexts as the State interprets and mediates global economising education reform discourses within the context of engaging the Bunbury community in planning processes to reform local schools.

### ***Discourses of devolution and community participation***

While many of the factors facilitating the need for education reform in the *LAEP Framework* (1997a), the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b) and the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) are constructed as emanating from an environment external to the Western Australian context (see Chapter Seven), the process for addressing these influences is linked to local practices through discourses of devolution and community participation. The section *Future Directions* in the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) positions parents decisively as partners in the schooling enterprise:

Partnerships between schools and their local communities will be strong. School staff will listen and respond to the needs of parents and the wider community and provide meaningful reports about school performance. Information on standards of student learning throughout the government school system will be available to all. (p. 7)

While the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) elevates parents to the status of partners, this is within a market view of devolution and community participation. Partners equates with the positioning of parents as consumers of educational services who are able to exercise choice in the local educational market-place based on the performance data provided by



schools. Like the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d), in the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b, Notes Overhead 5), there is a continuing dominance of the market view of devolution and community participation where *LAEP* is described as a “customer driven process.” Again, parents are positioned as consumers of educational services whose opinions are to be sought to ensure that educational services meet market needs in a changing educational environment (EDWA, 1997b, Notes Overhead 2).

Consistent with the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) and the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b), a major objective of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) is to provide more scope for community input and decision-making at the local level. *LAEP* is promoted as an innovative approach for developing “local responses to local needs” by changing the focus of planning for educational delivery from the system level, or an individual school level, to a group of schools within an education district (EDWA, 1997a, p. 10). It is claimed that this approach to planning will lead to the “needs of all students” being met by providing flexibility, diversity and choice in the types of public schools provided in the Bunbury educational district as well as more effective and efficient management of the delivery of curriculum, resources and educational services (EDWA, 1997a, p. 12).

While the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) reflects global discourses of education restructuring that emphasise the rhetoric of localised decision-making and implementation of policy, there are a number of contradictory participation discourses at play. The emphasis at the beginning of the policy text on providing more scope for decision-making at the local level, and on local people developing responses to local needs, initially suggests a social democratic discourse (Rizvi, 1993, 1994). Hence, the reference to localised decision-making implies a desire on the part of the State to lessen the isolation of schools from their communities and to redistribute decision-making power from central control to local sites. This signifies a sense of social agency for participants and collective community decision-making about appropriate school structures to meet community expectations and needs.

Both the corporate managerialist and market discourses of devolution and community participation are present in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a). As Ozga (2000b) explains, these neo-liberal economising discourses have become the dominant paradigm guiding education reform across most OECD countries as governments strive to demonstrate value for money in the expenditure of educational funds. The highly

prescriptive *LAEP* planning process outlined in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a, pp. 11-15) reflects a form of “managed participation” (Rizvi, 1993, p. 3). Hence, the *LAEP* participants through the application of efficiency indicators are required to demonstrate how a District Plan streamlines the delivery of educational services to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of the management and delivery of educational services across a district. The emphasis on producing greater flexibility, diversity and choice in the way education is delivered, which are consistent themes in the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d), the *Brochure* (EDWA, 1997e) and the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b), reflects the marketisation of education. Within this economising discourse, participants are constructed as consumers whereby the *LAEP* process seeks their opinions about school structures and ultimately enables them to exercise greater choice of schools in a restructured, more diverse educational market-place.

Before moving on to present experiences of the participants involved in the enactment of *LAEP*, I provide a snapshot of how the EDWA bureaucrats characterised the *progress* made by Government schooling in Western Australia since the inception of *Better Schools* (Pearce, 1987) and at the time *LAEP* was being undertaken in Bunbury. By the late-1990s, the Director-General of EDWA, Cheryl Vardon, had identified the main elements of restructuring and the future context for education in Western Australia as:

Right now all states and territories are moving to reform school systems in response to changes in Federal funding policies. Competition for students is the name of the game, together with a blurring of the distinctions between government and non-government schools and an improvement in the choice parents have for education of their children. (Vardon, 1997, p. 5)

The EDWA’s *Annual Report 1998-1999* describes the key features of EDWA’s restructuring initiatives in the following way:

In 1998, each government school had significant decision-making responsibility, was accountable for student outcomes, exhibited responsiveness to community needs and government policies and was encouraged to explore flexible approaches and structures for delivery of schooling. All schools were responsible for significant aspects of educational planning and administration, financial management, performance reporting and curriculum delivery and were required to establish their annual priorities through development planning processes that reflected government and systemic policies, local community needs and the identification of student outcomes that required particular attention. Schools were accountable for their

performance in improving student outcomes and managing resources through district directors to the Director-General, Minister for Education and government. (EDWA, 1999, p. 19)

In the *Annual Report 1998-1999* (EDWA, 1999), the corporate managerialist discourse of accountability is an enduring thread that binds much of the education restructuring rhetoric. The statement by the Director-General of Education illustrates how the restructuring of schooling along corporate managerialist lines throughout the 1980s has further opened the discursive terrain of education policy and practice to neo-liberal market principles throughout the 1990s. That is, economic discourses which emphasise competition and markets as expressed through policies such as school choice dominate Western Australian education policies moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The reframing of the public school sector as a market-place emphasises personal interest and individual gain, and diminishes the social purpose of education which prepares citizens to participate as members of a democracy. It is within this competitive environment that public schools increasingly compete not only with private schools but also with other public schools through marketing and image building to attract and retain their market share of students. Dehli (2004) observes that over the past two decades where OECD countries such as Australia have drawn on a neo-liberal globalisation discourse to justify education reform, the economisation and marketisation of education now form central elements of economic policy. She also cautions that one of the effects of these meta economic discourses has been to constrain practices of devolution and community participation at the local level. As discussed in Chapter Seven and Eight, it is against these dominant neo-liberal discourses about education restructuring that the social democratic discourses of devolution and community participation practices in school decision-making struggle to find expression.

## **SUMMARY**

In this chapter, a “policy genealogy” (Gale, 2001, pp. 384-390) approach is applied to trace the key education policy documents and reviews during the period 1975-1998 which aimed to reform and restructure the Western Australian public education system. The socio-political, economic and ideological contexts shaping public policy reform initiatives are identified and provide the broad environmental context in which to locate the policy manoeuvre of devolution and community participation as key education reform strategies. The social democratic, corporate managerialist and market/liberal models of

devolution and community participation (Rizvi, 1994) are drawn on to explain how these discourses are articulated in the formation and enactment of the education policy documents produced by successive Western Australian Governments. These models offer a developmental view of devolution and community participation and provide different views of where the power and authority to determine educational decision-making is located.

A key issue to emerge from the review of the education policy documents is that the dominant model of devolution and community participation represented in a particular education policy text tends to resonate with the broader ideological environment and economic and political pressures confronting nation-states. However, as illustrated through the deconstruction of the Western Australian policy documents, while one model of devolution may appear to “supersede” the other, more often they “sit in a residual, dominant and emergent relationship” in the policy texts which produced tensions and contradictory expectations in practice (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 85). Throughout the long economic boom period of the 1970s, a social democratic view of devolution and community participation gained prominence at a national and state level. Almost a decade later, with the tightened economic conditions of the 1980s, a global neo-liberal economic trend in education emerged and concerns for efficiency and effectiveness led to the concept of devolution being more akin to a corporate managerialist approach. The emphasis was on the decentralisation of administrative responsibility and accountability in contrast to a genuine delegation of power with an emphasis on managed participation at the local level and the separation of the consultative processes from decision-making management practice (Rizvi, 1994, p. 3). The power to determine when, where and under what conditions participation in the policy process would occur was held by decision-making elites within the Ministry of Education.

Since the late-1980s, in many western nations there has been a convergence of neo-liberal global themes, such as privatisation, parental choice, competition, rationalisation and the selling of school sites, and the implementation of performativity mechanisms in self-determining school (Ball, 1998c, p. 190) drawn on to guide education reform. This chapter demonstrates that these New Right themes, which are consistent with Rizvi’s (1994, p. 4) market or liberal individualist model of devolution and community participation, are dominant in key education restructuring documents from the late-1980s onwards. In policies such as *LAEP* (EDWA 1997a), discourses of devolution and

community participation also accommodate competing ideological positions. Hence, while neo-liberal market views of devolution and community participation promote parents as consumers of education services who make product choices, at the same time devolution reflects a social democratic and a corporate managerialist view. While inclusive participation in education decision-making is emphasised, in *LAEP* it is within a framework of accountability to the EDWA Central Office.

While the Western Australian education reform policies represent a state initiated top-down policy formation process, the internal contradictions and competing meanings of the discourses of devolution and community participation produce room for manoeuvre and slippage at the local sites of policy enactment. While there was capacity for interests groups to reconstruct the intent of the policies from the late-1980s onwards, neo-liberal education restructuring discourses of managerialism, competition and market arrangements were repeatedly reinforced by the State so that there were important continuities in policy development that sustained the enactment of a conservative education restructuring policy agenda.

## CHAPTER SIX

# PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING

### INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter Five, devolution and community participation in education decision-making have become part of the political vernacular in Western Australia since the mid-1980s. The *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b) and the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) also reveal the global education restructuring tendencies that promote, efficient and effective educational management and the redefinition of the roles of stakeholders through the devolution of education decision-making (Blackmore, 1993). In this chapter, I explore in greater detail how devolution and community participation are constructed as official policy discourses in *LAEP* and how this policy manoeuvre is interpreted and enacted within the EDWA bureaucracy and at the local level in Bunbury. I approach the notions of community participation and devolution in *LAEP* from the perspective that, as discourses, they contain “polyvalent” qualities (Kesby, 2003, p. 2) or, as G. Anderson (1998, p. 574 drawing on Laclau & Mouffe) says, are “floating signifier[s]” that can be attached to a wide variety of political agendas that often produce contradictory and contested effects in practice.

To examine the issues of participation in *LAEP*, this chapter comprises three main sections. The first section provides an overview of the *LAEP* planning process outlined in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and identifies how community participation is formally integrated. I then discuss the contradictory participatory discourses contained in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and illustrate how a social democratic participatory discourse is appropriated by policy elites to promote community participation. In the light of the political rhetoric promoting community participation in *LAEP*, an overview of the participants’ reactions to their participation in the planning process is presented. The second section initially discusses *LAEP* as an “invited” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27) policy space and addresses how participants became involved in *LAEP* and why a group of middle-class professional parents were preferred to represent

their school communities on the *LAEP* Drafting and Consultative Committees. In section three, I *problematise* the notion of community representativeness and participation in *LAEP* and explore the contradiction whereby the parent representatives who were elected to represent their school communities were identified by EDWA policy elites as vested interests who were unrepresentative of their communities. Given these claims, the participants' motivation for becoming involved in *LAEP*, their expectations and the lived reality of the nature of their participation in *LAEP* are explored through the application of Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* (see Appendix 13). This third section concludes with a discussion of the constraints participants identified around their participation in *LAEP*.

Addressing the aforementioned issues conceptualises *LAEP* as both "text" and "discourse" (Ball, 1994a, p. 15) and recognises the interaction between structural and institutional influences as well as the lived experience and effects of *LAEP* as a participatory policy in practice. To illuminate the interaction between the broad structural factors shaping the State's participatory discourses, and the micro level of participants' initial experiences of their participation in *LAEP*, I draw on the following theoretical ideas from the CPTF. At the macro structural level:

- the way policy discourses of devolution and community participation are mediated, interpreted and [re]constructed at the state and local levels by particular stakeholders.

At the middle-range agenda-building level:

- the way policy discourses of devolution and community participation are shaped by the agenda-building processes used by the state to initiate policy change; and
- the way policy discourses of devolution and community participation legitimate particular forms of conduct and participation while they marginalise others.

At the micro lived experience level:

- the way policy discourses of devolution and community participation allow for contradictory and contested interpretations and subject positions.

As a way forward, I now provide an overview of how community participation is formally incorporated in the *LAEP* planning process outlined in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a).

## PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

A major objective outlined in the *LAEP Framework* (1997a) is to provide more scope for community input and decision-making at the local level. To incorporate community and school representatives into the *LAEP* planning process, the *LAEP Framework* document identifies five stages of which three involve community participation. The primary aim of the planning process in each local area is to “explore all possible options so that gaps and overlaps in curriculum provision are addressed and resources used effectively” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 11). The stages of the *LAEP* planning process and the roles of parent representatives and other stakeholders as outlined in the *Framework* document which are relevant to this study are as follows:

*Stage one: Developing a Draft LAEP Options Plan.* This stage involves the establishment of a Drafting Committee to collect, to analyse and to generate “feasible options to improve educational opportunities” for a particular educational district (EDWA, 1997a, p. 21). Membership of *LAEP* was facilitated through eliciting a specified number of representatives from the existing groups within EDWA Central and District Offices and school communities in the educational district. The *LAEP Framework* document was highly prescriptive in identifying the following groups as legitimate stakeholders in *LAEP*:

- District Director (Schools)-Chair
- 3 senior high school principals
- 3 teaching staff
- 2 non-teaching staff
- 3 senior high school parent representatives (non staff)
- 1 primary school principal
- 1 primary school parent (non staff)
- 1 secondary student representative. (EDWA, 1997a, p. 21)

The District Director (Schools) and the senior high school principals are automatically members of the Drafting Committee while the other representatives are nominated by their school communities. It is important to note that while secondary students were identified in the *LAEP Framework* as legitimate stakeholders in the *LAEP* planning process, they were not represented on any of *LAEP* planning committees. In terms of managing the *LAEP* process, it is the role of the District Directors (Schools) to “lead their



school communities in developing agreements on changes in the district which will be of benefit to everyone” (EDWA, 1997e, p. 3). The terms of reference also require the members of the Drafting Committee to “assist the District Director (Schools) to develop a draft Local Area Education Plan” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 21). In the development of the *Draft Options Plan*, educational opportunities are to be identified by “considering and analysing information; refining the grouping of schools; and developing all options, then making a recommendation” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 21). When the Drafting Committee is satisfied that it has met the terms of reference, the District Director (Schools) submits the *Draft Options Plan* for consideration and approval by the Education Department’s Senior Executive who will make a decision on “which options are feasible based on Education Department policies and availability of resources” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 23).

*Stage Two: Consultation with school communities.* Following Senior Executive approval for the release of the *Draft Options Plan*, the District Director (Schools) establishes a Consultative Committee which comprises the Drafting Committee members as well as the principal and a parent representative from any primary school directly affected by a proposal. At the first meeting, other permanent members can be nominated and, throughout the consultative phase, further members can be co-opted as appropriate. The terms of reference of the group involve “assisting the District Director (Schools) to develop the Local Area Education Plan for the area and to prepare a Consultation Report” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 24). The key tasks identified in the *LAEP Framework* are to:

- develop a consultation plan which explicitly states how the consultation process is to be conducted ...;
- consider and respond to all issues;
- ensure decisions comply with principles and planning indicators;
- confirm or propose changes to the recommended organisational pattern of schools in the area as specified in the draft Local Area Education Plan; and
- prepare a Consultation Report. (EDWA, 1997a, p. 24)

The Consultation Committee members are also responsible for ensuring that all members of the schools and wider community have been given all of the information used to develop the *Draft Options Plan* and that their views have been represented on the Committee. At the end of this process, the District Director (Schools) submits the final draft plan with a Consultation Report. The Consultation Report must contain all the

community reactions to the *Draft Options Plan* (EDWA, 1997a, p. 25). As Chapter Eight illustrates, these terms of reference were the subject of extensive contestation at both the Drafting and Consultative Committee meetings by parent and teacher representatives.

*Stage three: Approval for Consultation Plan.* Stage three of the *LAEP* process entails the Director-General considering the Local Area Education Plan and Consultation Report and recommending that the Minister for Education either approves the Plan or refers it back to the District Director (Schools) for further development (EDWA, 1997a, p. 25). Both the Director-General and the Minister for Education need to be satisfied that the *LAEP* planning principles and indicators have been followed, that there has been extensive consultation with school communities, and that the Consultation Report accurately reflects community views (EDWA, 1997a, p. 25). When they are satisfied that these conditions have been met, the process moves on to the fourth stage, which is the implementation phase.

### **Promoting Public Participation in *LAEP*: Political Rhetoric**

The rhetoric surrounding the promotion of *LAEP* by the Coalition Minister for Education Colin Barnett and senior EDWA personnel, offers a lens through which to view how particular participatory discourses were appropriated at the level of practice by these policy elites to promote community participation in Western Australia. While the market and corporate management discourses of devolution and community participation (Rizvi, 1994) are dominant in the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997e), the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b) and the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) (see Chapter Five), it is the social democratic discourse that features more strongly as the Minister's rationale for community participation in *LAEP*. Hence, the "economizing" (Ozga, 2000b, p. 24) discourses of educational change are marginalised as the democratic participatory discourse is accentuated in the political rhetoric promoting *LAEP*. For example, in the Minister for Education's introduction to the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a, p. 1), the notion that *LAEP* is driven by an economic rationalist agenda is negated when he says "I would like to assure the community that Local Area Education Planning is ... not about cost cutting." His rationale for involving community participation in *LAEP* emphasises social democratic notions of active citizenship, which he constructs as natural and unquestionable:

... the Education Department developed a process for ensuring that communities are given greater involvement in planning for the provision of education in their area .... We also need to allow for the reality that our community is better informed today than ever before. Members of the community expect to be involved in the planning of government services, particularly those that involve their children .... Local Area Education Planning will allow schools, parents and local communities, to guide education planning in their local area and meet, in a better way, the specific needs of students, both now and for the future. (EDWA, 1997a, p. 1)

The importance of community involvement also features in the rhetoric promoting *LAEP*. In a media release in May 1997, the Director-General of Education Chery Vardon highlights the significance of community, rather than the rights of individual consumers of educational services. The Director-General states that community participation in *LAEP* is a process designed to “strengthen the relationship between schools and their communities” because “schools are at the heart of communities” (EDWA, 1997c, p. 2). The social democratic theme of authentic community participation, whereby participants are empowered throughout the planning process to influence the outcomes for their school communities, also features strongly in the political rhetoric in *LAEP*. In a media statement, the Minister for Education states:

The *LAEP* process across the State of Western Australia has seen an unprecedented level of community discussion take place on education. Nowhere else in Australia have parents and school communities been asked to participate in such detailed discussions on the future of secondary schooling. (Minister for Education, June 24, 1998, p. 1)

A senior EDWA administrator, who promoted community participation in the public arena, stated that the *LAEP* consultation process has “focused on developing local solutions to meet the needs of the local area and the local population drove the decisions and resulted in continuing the changing face of the delivery of education” (Moroz, 2003, p. 6). The emphasis on local and collective decision-making sits comfortably within a social democratic discourse of devolution and conveys participation as a form of active empowered citizenship rather than participation as empowering consumers through increasing the choice of educational services. While the *LAEP* policy texts contain competing official discourses about community participation, as I have illustrated it was the social democratic discourse that the Government policy elites drew on to promote public participation in *LAEP*. It is against this background that I now want to explore how these ideas about devolution and community participation in education decision-making

are received and interpreted in practice at the middle-range bureaucratic level of EDWA and by the local community. Initially, I examine how participants' characterised their experiences of participating in *LAEP* and how their stories speak to and resonate with the official rhetoric promoting community participation in *LAEP*.

## **LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PARTICIPATION IN *LAEP***

To understand participants' overall experience of their participation in *LAEP*, I invited each participant to talk about what it was like to be involved in *LAEP*. While most of the parents and teachers expressed that they had initially felt optimistic about participating in *LAEP*, as their stories unfolded many representatives expressed a sense of disillusionment about the process that was palpable. Furthermore, despite the time lapse since the completion of *LAEP* in early-January, 2001, and the commencement of the interviews in 2004/2005, most of those interviewed expressed a great deal of negativity about the experience of participating in the *LAEP* planning process.

The following stories about *LAEP* are told in the participants' voices to reflect the multi-tonal character of optimism, hope, enthusiasm, reflection, despair, anger, disappointment, betrayal and outrage, so that the feel of what it was like to be involved in *LAEP* comes across strongly. To emphasise the voice of participants I have used a different font from the main body of the text. In representing participants' views, I have not only attempted to convey the depth of their experiences but also the areas of commonality and polarisation between and within the different stakeholder groups. By presenting the "multivoiced" (Quantz & O'Connor, 1988, p. 99) nature and diversity of participants' lived experiences of *LAEP*, multiple meanings and the contested nature of community participation policies in practice are made visible. This approach also offers some understanding about why *LAEP* was such a highly contested process.

### **From Optimism to Disillusionment**

For parent representatives there were two consistent themes that emerged from the interviews. First, the *LAEP* documentation or discussions with senior EDWA administrators had played a role in informing many of their views about the nature of community participation in *LAEP*. Second, all participants expected to exercise a high level of social agency in relation to the nature of the *LAEP* participatory processes and the outcomes. All participants who became involved at the beginning of the *LAEP* process in

1998 expected that they would contribute to and influence a process designed to genuinely review the provision of public education in Bunbury. In this sense, the *LAEP* documentation or discussions with senior EDWA administrators, which reflected a social democratic discourse of community participation, had “truth effects” (Foucault cited in Dehli, 2004, p. 51). This discourse emphasises participation as a form of active empowered citizenship, which assumes participants will exercise social agency in the process. The following enthusiastic comment from a parent suggests that he expected to be able to influence the *LAEP* process through exercising social agency. He explains:

Instead of the Minister and senior executives deciding in camera and then announcing the plans for education, we now have *LAEP*. This new method of education planning process involved consultation and that pleased me a great deal. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004)

Many participants also indicated that they were optimistic that *LAEP* would not only improve or enhance education services across the District and they also felt excited about being part of the process. In the words of one of the participants:

When I first started I thought what they were trying to do was have an open discussion about what might be the best education plan for Bunbury. When I first started to go I actually enjoyed it because I thought you were actually viewing and looking at some of the fundamental institutions of our society and how they work for this community. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

The sense of enthusiasm for and expectation of the process also came across strongly in the following parent’s comment when she said “I found it quite exciting at first as there was such a dedicated group of people who were keen and who represented a fairly wide range of interests who were keen to make a contribution” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 11, 2004). The teacher and local schools administrators, like parent representatives, were initially very optimistic about participating in *LAEP*. One EDWA representative expressed the view that, prior to the actual commencement of the *LAEP* process, he supported the proposed process. He explained, “I sold the document [*LAEP Framework*] to the P & C as a reasonable model because what it’s talking about for all stages was involving the community” (Senior EDWA educator, personal communication, October 28, 2004).

Similar to the parent representatives, most of the senior EDWA administrators were initially optimistic about *LAEP* and emphasised the importance and value of parent participation in the planning process. In the words of one senior EDWA administrator:

The idea of the process was good because it offered a wonderful opportunity to review and restructure everything as well as allowing people to say what they want and to shape their educational institutions in their community ... what *LAEP* did was that it gave the opportunity for local people including parents to be part of the planning process ... that's exciting because I know that the local people can add value to the outcome. They were the strengths. (Central EDWA office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

Despite many of the participants' initial optimism and enthusiasm about participating in *LAEP*, once embedded in the planning process participants across all of the stakeholder groups expressed negativity about their involvement. The depth of negative feelings about *LAEP* is illustrated in the following range of comments. One senior EDWA administrator told me that the process for him was "horrific, absolutely, there were some very hurtful things said about me and to me" (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005). A senior EDWA Central Office administrator also said that the *LAEP* process was "a problematic and an unhappy experience because after everyone became unhappy, I'd go down there and face these hostile departmental meetings and public meetings" (EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004). One of the EDWA school administrators expressed a sense of disillusionment with *LAEP* because he "felt it was a very, very disappointing process ... and it was soul destroying getting the community off-side" (School administrator, personal communication, November 30, 2004). In a similar vein, a teacher representative explained that, for him, *LAEP* was "a frustrating process ... I certainly recall feeling very strongly once it had finished that I wouldn't be volunteering my time to do it again ... I felt that my time had been wasted" (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 7, 2004).

The range of responses from parent representatives was equally negative. One parent representative described the experiences as "extremely time consuming and also emotionally draining. We used to come home from meetings so distressed, exhausted absolutely ... it completely and utterly wore down most people who were on it" (Parent

representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004). Other parents also expressed how disheartened they felt about *LAEP*. In the words of one parent:

I've looked back at the experience and I think how horrendous it was at the time ... I got more and more aggrieved ... it's left a very bitter experience for me around how on earth do you get around a situation ... so you wonder about the futility of it all. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

Another parent told me that the process left him feeling “frustrated, angry, disappointed, a lot of grey hairs, a lot of people I came to detest and started to hate” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2005). The extent of the disillusionment was described by another parent as:

Ugly, there were times when it was awful. You felt like you were being insulted, that you were being demeaned, being undermined. It didn't feel nice to be going along to the meetings ... I found that so offensive because I had kids in that system. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

This initial snapshot of participants' reactions to and experiences of *LAEP* suggests that the local working out of education reforms that invites greater local and parental involvement and choice is far messier and more contingent than a simple imposition of a “world culture policy” (Anderson-Levitt, 2003, p. 1) or “straight-forward” implementation of policy (Dehli, 2004, p. 51). Furthermore, Apple's (2006) concern that policies that promote greater local participation, often in the name of inclusion, result in deepening educational inequalities and political polarisation resonates with participants' comments about *LAEP*. Given these ideas about the contested interpretation of policy in practice, I asked participants to explore why they were so disillusioned with the *LAEP* process.

While various explanations were offered by participants for the cause of their disillusionment with *LAEP*, common themes emerged within stakeholder groups. For example, the EDWA administrators' issues with the *LAEP* process included the prescriptive nature of the planning process, disillusionment with the nature of the issues they confronted in managing the process, and the community participants' misinterpretation of their level of decision-making power. Many of the EDWA Central and District Office administrators identified the parent representatives as a vested interest group who were *unrepresentative of real parents*. Most of the teacher and parent

representatives spoke extensively about their anger and frustration with the protracted and intense level of conflict, and the attempts by EDWA administrators to marginalise their roles and to silence their voices. Common to all stakeholder groups was the contestation over the purpose of *LAEP*, conflict over decision-making processes and outcomes, and the challenges to the representativeness of the parent group. In this sense, *LAEP* clearly demonstrates that participatory discourses contain “polyvalent” qualities (Kesby, 2003, p. 2), which at the level of practice can mean many different things depending on the context, relative social power and the expectations of the stakeholders and institutions involved.

In the light of the EDWA Central and District Office administrator’s claims that one of the problems they experienced with *LAEP* was the lack of *representativeness of real parents*, in the following section, I discuss the notion of *LAEP* as an “invited” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27) policy space and explore how the “political opportunity structures” (Meyer, 2003, p. 19) for participation in *LAEP*, the possession of certain types of social and cultural capital and the promotion of a professional parent discourse constrained and enabled the participation of certain groups of parents as *LAEP* representatives. This approach sheds some light on how structural and institutional influences interact with the lived experience of volunteering to participate in *LAEP* to reproduce class based participation in *LAEP*.

## **POLICY SPACES AND BECOMING A *LAEP* REPRESENTATIVE**

Cornwall (2002b, p. 8) reminds us that policy “spaces” are not neutral and need to be understood in terms of the “power relations” which shape, surround and enter them. Drawing on Lefebvre (1991), Cornwall explains the relationship between power and “space” in the following way:

Space is a social product ... it is not simply ‘there’, a neutral container waiting to be filled, but is a dynamic, humanly constructed means of control, and hence of domination, of power. (p. 6)

Policy spaces, while existing in a dynamic relationship to one another, can generally be distinguished by whether they are “closed spaces”, “invited spaces” and “claimed/created” (Gaventa, 2006, pp. 26-27) spaces. *LAEP*, as an “invited” policy (p. 26) space, is an attempt on the part of the Western Australian Government to shift decisions about education restructuring from a closed policy space to a more open one



through inviting people (as consumers, citizens or beneficiaries) to participate in policy processes. Invited policy spaces may be regularised: that is they are institutionalised and ongoing, or more transient, through to one-off forms of consultation. *LAEP*, however, is typical of a “transient” policy space with a time limited period for deliberations (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26). Conceptualising *LAEP* as an invited policy space, which is permeated by power relations as well as bounded by forms of discourse, leads us to question who created the space; the methods or techniques used to facilitate participation (thereby setting the agenda), and on what basis individuals were invited to participate (Brock, Cornwall, & Gaventa, 2001; Cornwall, 2002a, 2002b; Gaventa, 2006). It is these issues that I now address.

### **Public Participation and Political Opportunity Structures**

As Gaventa and Cornwall (2001, p. 71) contend, when political spaces are “opened to include new voices and new perspectives”, often the political rhetoric suggests, as was the case with *LAEP*, that “policy deliberations will be more representative as well as more democratic.” The way citizen participation is formally structured and the methods used to facilitate participation in invited policy spaces, are not only, as Wagenaar (2006, p. 228) suggests, highly “sensitive to the quality of its design”, but need to be understood in relation to the “different political configurations that constitute governance in any given context” (Cornwall, 2004b, p. 9). In relation to *LAEP*, EDWA’s framing of the “political opportunity structures”, which Meyer (2003, p. 19) says “generally refers to the contextual factors that promote or constrain participation” or “institutional rules” (Nentwich, 1996, p. 2), was based on the notion of representative democracy rather than participative democracy. In this way, the defining of the participatory policy space and the structuring of the categories of participants were developed by the State through a top-down policy process with real *effects* in terms of the inclusion/exclusion of certain groups within the school communities.

Critics of representative participatory planning processes further argue that “in inequitable societies representative systems will inevitably reproduce social, economic and political inequities in terms of who can engage with and influence decision-making” (McGee et al., 2003, p. 9). Barnes, et al. (2003) also draw attention to the exclusionary effects of political opportunities structures for participatory processes framed around the notion of representative democracy. Hence, assumptions about the democratic nature of

civil society and equality of opportunity for participation in models of representative democracy need to be problematised to avoid masking or diffusing power differences in relation to class, race and special interest groups. In a similar vein, Della Porta and Diani (1999) found that people from mid to high social positions are more likely to engage and constitute the core groups in participatory processes. Other writers also identify the middle-class nature of contemporary participatory processes as a defining feature (Barnes, Newman, & Sullivan, 2006; Crossley, 2002; K. Offe, 1985; Parry, Moyser, & Day, 1992; Pattie, Seyd, & Whiteley, 2004; Ray et al., 2003; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). These findings are reflected in *LAEP* where all of the parent representatives, except one, were tertiary educated, middle-class professionals with high visibility within the Bunbury community. The dynamic underpinning the dominance of middle-class professional parents as *LAEP* representatives is explored below.

### **Electing *LAEP* Participants: Social and Cultural Capital**

As previously discussed, the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) was highly prescriptive in defining which stakeholders comprised the *LAEP* Drafting and Consultative Committees. The EDWA District Office administrators and the school principals were automatically members of both committees as were the Central Office administrators who attended on an “as needs basis” (Senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, February 26, 2005). The teachers and school administrators were democratically elected by their school communities to be their *LAEP* representatives. From my discussion with participants, I concluded that no process was developed to include the voice of students throughout the *LAEP* planning process. This lack of attention to deliberately include student representation in the *LAEP* processes meant that their views about the provision of public education in Bunbury did not form part of the public debate.

For parent representatives, there were two main points of entry into the formal *LAEP* committees. The first point of entry was at the beginning of the *LAEP* process where many of the participants were elected by their school communities prior to the formation of the *LAEP* Drafting Committee. The second point of entry occurred after the *LAEP* Drafting Committee had been meeting for some time. All of these parents were also ultimately democratically elected to represent their school community. While there were

42 representatives in total from the stakeholder groups, only 17 were parent representatives.

While the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) details the *formal rules* for the inclusion of stakeholder groups on the *LAEP* committees, participants' informal claims about their legitimacy to speak for *others* emerged in their stories about how they became *LAEP* representatives. Like other studies on community participation, the key factors facilitating teacher and parent participation in *LAEP* included measures of social capital such as, an individual's positioning within personal or organisational networks and their previous experience of representing *others* (Barnes et al., 2006; Borshuk, 2004; Della Porta & Diani, 1999; Ray et al., 2003; Skidmore, Bound, & Lownsborough, 2006). All of the school administrators, teachers and parent representatives considered that they were preferred to represent their school communities over the *inexperienced* candidates because they had well developed networks and they were familiar with the issues and processes associated with representing their colleagues or community on a broad range of committees. The following comment from a teacher explains how she was democratically elected by her colleagues as the teacher representative on *LAEP* and illustrates that she considered her experience in representing staff interests was an important factor in her being chosen as the *LAEP* representative:

At the time I was the Staff Association President ... I was actually voted in as the rep ... there were other people who were interested in doing the job. (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 8, 2004)

In some schools, however, the Principal requested particular staff members to be the teacher representative on *LAEP*. Again, staff representatives had performed or currently held an official staff representative position within their school. As one *LAEP* staff representative stated:

I was invited by the Principal ... to be a staff member on the grounds that I was a union representative for quite a while on the school level ... as part of the union position I had been involved in mediation processes and things involving staff and I think he [the Principal] felt I had the confidence of the staff to take up the position. (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 7, 2004)

Like the teacher representatives, most of the elected parent representatives who became involved in *LAEP* at the commencement of the Drafting Committee meetings in 1998

were already engaged with their school communities through occupying an official position, such as President or Vice President of the school Parents and Citizens' Association (hereafter P & C) or were a member of the School Council or Board. All of the parent *LAEP* representatives were elected through their school P & C. Most of the parents indicated that they assumed that they would be one of the parent representatives because they were already representing their school community in an official capacity. One parent said "I was a member of the School Council and I was elected to represent the secondary process that was being undertaken by the Education Department" (Parent representative, personal communication, November 11, 2005). Another parent was elected by his school community because he was the Bunbury District representative on a state-wide education committee. He explained:

Basically I got on there as a representative from ... school. That was one way I got on there. The other way was as the ... representative for the Bunbury District ... in a way I was lucky because I was involved in some participation via ... with the Education Bill. ... I knew more about local area education planning than a lot of district directors did and a lot of people did. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004)

In order to understand political exclusiveness in relation to who entered the participatory space and who was excluded, it is important to address the structural power differentials operating which shaped parent representation. To address these issues, I now explore parent representativeness in *LAEP* from the perspective that, in participatory planning processes, the groups or individuals who speak for *others* emerge from the interaction of discursive and structural factors operating in a particular "political field" as well as the social agency of individuals (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 379-465). Of particular concern is how participatory discourses develop in policy spaces that authorise and endorse people with certain social and demographic characteristics while other groups are not legitimated, or self exclude, as representatives in participatory processes.

### **Reproducing Class Based Participation: Habitus, Capital and Field**

Ray et al. (2003, p. 40) contend that it is important to understand how the political field itself authorises and endorses people with certain social and demographic characteristics. Here, Bourdieu's (1984, p. 101) ideas in relation to "habitus", "capital" and "field" go some way toward explaining the legitimation and selection of parent participants for *LAEP* within school communities. Bourdieu (1984, p. 125) sees the need to relate

“habitus” (the internalized dispositions acquired by people during their lives) combined with “capital” (personal resources) to the “field” (structured social conditions) in order to see how people with particular kinds of resources, such as middle-class tertiary qualified professional parents, are able to dominate participatory processes such as *LAEP*. These three overlapping concepts provide a lens through which to view how different types of capital combine with the workings of the meso-level of institutions within the “political field” in a way which allows certain kinds of resources or “capital” to be valued and others excluded.

Bourdieu (1997, p. 47) argues that capital presents itself in three fundamental forms: economic capital (for example, material wealth in the form of property, money and shares), social capital (for example, social resources in the form of networks and contacts based on mutual recognition), and cultural capital (for example, informational assets in the form of knowledge and skills acquired through socialisation and education). These fundamental forms of capital are different forms of power, but the relative importance of the different forms will vary according to the fields within which social practices occur (Bourdieu, 1984, 1997). By distinguishing between the different types of capital, Bourdieu is, as Ray et al. (2003, p. 40) contend, “concerned to avoid either reducing action to the resources that people command, or to the mobilizing appeals of institutions” which operate within the political field. Understanding, therefore, how elements of habitus, in combination with capital, feed into the political field is fundamental to understanding the legitimization within school communities of a discourse promoting middle-class professional parents as *LAEP* representatives.

Bourdieu (1984) claims that there is an exclusive political field, comprised of a range of political associations as well as interest groups, where public claims are only legitimated when they emanate from those endowed with various kinds of *capital*. Those lacking such resources feel either that they are not competent to become active, or they become active in ways that are not part of the recognised political field and are, hence, marginalised. Bourdieu (1984) explains how the “political field” operates.

[There are] social agents, occupying different positions in the field of class relations and defined by a greater or lesser specific political competence—a greater or lesser capacity to recognize a political question as political and to treat it as such by responding to it politically ... this capacity is inseparable from a more or less strong feeling of being competent in the full sense of the word, that is socially

recognized as entitled to deal with political affairs, to express an opinion about them or even modify their course. (p. 399)

Within the context of *LAEP*, habitus may be understood through the way in which invisible forms of power act to keep parent participants out of representative decision-making arenas. That is, power may be internalised in terms of one's values, self-esteem and identity, in ways which prevent people from asserting their right to participate (Gaventa, 2005, p. 8). This is particularly potent where participatory discourses are constructed that legitimate participants as those possessing certain types of expert knowledge and skills and no recognition is given to other forms of knowledge. In the case of *LAEP*, it was the development of a professional parent discourse and a managerialist planning process that required expert knowledge that contributed to the legitimization of middle class professional parents and the exclusion of parents without these types of social and cultural capital.

### ***Professional parent discourses***

I. Young (1996, p. 123) argues that the “norms of deliberation while culturally specific” also operate as forms of power that silence or devalue the speech of some people. Power in relationship to place and space works, as Hayward (1998, p. 5) contends, through particular discourses in ways that put boundaries on participation and can “delimit fields of possible action.” In this way, inequalities in socio economic status, technical knowledge, power and the lack of recognition of experiential knowledge can continually devalue what Chandoke (2003, p. 186) terms the “linguistic and epistemic authority” of subaltern actors. Hence, informal discourses of participation circulating within specific contexts or policy spaces, such as *LAEP*, contain assumptions about what constitutes a competent participant and can have a significant bearing on participation/non-participation.

In *LAEP*, the teacher and parent participants' claims to legitimacy to speak for others tended to be based on personal capacities and professional identities, which were considered to confer the insights necessary to define the problems to be addressed in the *LAEP* drafting and consultative process. For example, within the category of parent representative, it was professional knowledge and technical skills that formed part of a *professional parent* discourse, that were highly valued within school communities. This not only says something about the discursive repertoire that informs conceptions about

the nature of democratic debate and the processes of representation on which committee membership should be based but, also, the micro processes through which official and lay discourses of the notion of representation and legitimate participation are negotiated (Barnes et al., 2003). It was, therefore, the discourse of professionalism and structural differentials based on social class that contributed to the exclusion of non-professional parent groups from becoming *LAEP* representatives.

The following comments from participants demonstrate how “power/knowledge” (Foucault, 1980, pp. 92-93) works through a *professional parent* discourse in school communities, or a political field, to exclude participants without certain types of knowledge and skills as legitimate representatives. In this way, the middle-class educated professional parents were able to claim the participatory space in *LAEP* and to legitimate their election as the *LAEP* representatives based on their claims to particular skills, knowledge, professional qualifications and experience. A parent representative drew on a *professional parent* discourse to justify his election as the *LAEP* representative in his school community:

I'm a senior public servant, so I've got a great deal of public service expertise and knowledge. I have also been, through my work, involved in a lot of development and other types of activities across a whole range of business and industry areas. I have a Masters in Literature and Communication and a Masters in Business Administration ... so how communication ought to happen, looking at business cases all falls naturally within. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

Another parent expressed the view that he was selected over other parents in his school community because he was a very senior public servant with extensive experience and skills in policy, planning and community engagement. He explained:

I had the added advantage of having the professional background that could actually allow me to contribute meaningfully to the actual process ... I have had many years' experience in planning processes where there is community engagement ... I had, and still do have, a good understanding of policy development and policy outcomes ... those skills and expertise were really almost like a template that I used to throw over, or put over, the way in which the process was being conducted. They were significant because a lot of my training is not about dealing with things in isolation. I also had a very strong agenda around community. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

Many tertiary educated, professional parents believed that they had the confidence, knowledge and expertise to represent their school communities. One parent, who occupied a senior public service position, identified the following skills from her professional qualifications and work experience that she thought were essential to be able to participate effectively as a *LAEP* committee member:

I think the skill of conceptual thinking and particularly the ability to hold complexity together conceptually in your head is essential when you're trying to figure out a complex situation where you don't have all the factors and they are coming in at you very quickly. So I think that stuff around conceptual capacity, intellectual analysis was really important because the thing moved so quickly and the documents that were produced had to be read and thought through very quickly. You had to be articulate because there were so many other articulate people. You had to be assertive just to get a voice heard and you had to be confident of operating in the public arena ... you had to have a professional assertiveness, you had to be really articulate at that process, you had to have a logical reasoning process to take things apart. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

While the professional parent discourse legitimated the participation of middle-class, professional parents, within the context of *LAEP*, habitus may also be understood through the way in which invisible forms of power act to keep participants out of representative decision-making arenas. Understanding, therefore, how elements of habitus, in combination with capital feed into the political field is fundamental to understanding the exclusion of certain groups of participants. A number of the participants identified how this hidden form of power led to the exclusion of certain groups of actors from becoming a *LAEP* representative. One parent said that the “average mums and dads” at her school had approached her and emphasised that they did not feel that they possessed the skills or ability to represent the school community in *LAEP*. She described her exchange with a parent from her school community in the following way:

I remember talking to a mother ... when I was going through this soul searching about what on earth I represented. She said to me no, no, no, it's really important that you're in that position - people like you are in that position. You're able to take what we tell you and put it into fancy words, you're able to talk to these government people and you don't get scared by them, you don't get worried that you're using the wrong words. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)



She also makes the point about the nature of the exclusivity operating in this political field when she highlights the role that middle-class parents, such as herself, play in acting as a conduit for other groups of parents without similar levels of cultural and social capital:

It was quite an interesting conversation and I was thinking to myself well maybe that's a legitimate role ... the middle-class has to stay in these public schools because they become conduits for the expressions that can't get up the system. People like us say of course you can go and do that, you just go and do it. Some mums and dads maybe don't want to do it but also haven't got the skills and knowledge. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

A number of other parent representatives also said that they had received letters from parents from their school communities who had thanked them for being willing to participate in *LAEP*. These parents also felt that they were not confident to be a representative because they didn't have the skills, knowledge or professional qualifications to deal with the education system or the expert knowledge and experience to participate in a technocratic planning process.

### ***Technocratic planning processes: Expert knowledge as cultural capital***

The configuration of institutional arrangements for participatory processes in a political field are also significant in reinforcing patterns of interaction between government and interest groups (Kitschelt, 1986; Nentwich, 1996). As previously discussed, the political opportunity structures for participation in *LAEP* were structured around a system of representative democracy at the local level. Like other studies, it was the participants with high levels of social and cultural capital in terms of professional qualifications and skills that dominated the representative roles in *LAEP* (Barnes et al., 2006; Crossley, 2002; Lowndes, Pratchett, & Stoker, 2006; K. Offe, 1985; Parry et al., 1992; Pattie et al., 2004; Ray et al., 2003; Verba et al., 1995). When also considered in relation to the structuring of the planning process in *LAEP*, we can gain further insights into how the political field privileged the participation of middle-class, tertiary qualified, professional parents relative to other groups of parents without similar levels of social and cultural capital and claims to particular forms of knowledge/expertise.

The planning process as outlined in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) promotes a rational decision-making process. Reflective of corporate managerial discourses, the

planning process is conveyed as objective, and the knowledge upon which decisions are based is assumed to be value-free and scientific. As Dudley and Vidovich (1995, p. 13) explain, this form of “technocratic rationality provides for objective rational decision-making, founded neither on ‘ideology’ nor the subjectivity of values but upon scientifically based research facts and figures and expert knowledge.” From their research Barnes, et al. (2004, p. 108) conclude that corporate managerialist discourses and a “technocratic rational planning process will not enable the development of discursive practices capable of including diverse voices in the policy process.” Gordan, Lewis and Young (1993, p. 8) refer to the rational linear technical model of policy planning and decision-making as a “dignified” myth “embedded in technocracy” which actually limits which types of knowledge are valued within a particular political field. By constructing the planning tasks in terms of a rational analysis of technical information, it is technical expertise, professionalism, and expert knowledge similar to the knowledge and skills possessed by the professional parent participants that appear to be valued and required to participate in the *LAEP* process. Deliberative planning processes and experiential and qualitative information sources of knowledge are marginalised within rational planning processes. This point is illustrated by the one parent representative who was not professionally qualified when he described what he regarded as “ordinary parents” reactions to the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a). In his own words:

I thought community would ... put some ideas through talk about things but ... the framework was in education jargon and most parents didn't understand what the hell they were talking about. I used to speak in lay-man's [sic] terms people used to talk in ed speak and I used to say 'stop, I haven't understood a bloody word you just said in the past five minutes. Stop talking in education speak and speak in terms that parents can understand.' Most parents didn't get involved because it just got too hard. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004)

While it is important to identify the formal ways in which EDWA sought to engage with the public, and the factors and processes leading to the selection of *LAEP* representatives, equally significant is the way notions of legitimate participants are contested through discourses of community representation and representativeness at the local practice level by different interests (Barnes et al., 2003). In the following section, I problematise the notion of community representativeness and participation in *LAEP* and explore the contradiction whereby the parent representatives who were elected to represent their school communities were identified by EDWA policy elites as having vested interests

and as being unrepresentative of their communities. Given these claims I explore participants' motivation for becoming involved in *LAEP*, their expectations and the lived reality of the nature of their participation in *LAEP*. To locate the participants' expected and actual levels of influence throughout the *LAEP* planning process, I draw on Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*. I conclude with a discussion of the constraints participants identified about their participation in *LAEP*.

## **CONTESTING COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVENESS**

As Barnes et al. (2003) observe, often participatory planning processes that seek local community representation by enlisting representatives from existing groups and organisations are overlaid with complex configurations in practice leading to tensions and questions about the nature of representation and the representativeness of participants. As previously discussed, throughout the *LAEP* planning process tensions emerged between EDWA officials and parent representatives about the basis upon which representativeness could be claimed and the legitimacy of parent representatives to speak and act on behalf of their school communities.

Despite parent representatives being democratically elected by their school communities, many of the EDWA Central and District Office administrators claimed that the parent group represented minority interests. Contestation over these issues became part of the ongoing struggle between EDWA officials and with individuals and groups throughout the *LAEP* planning process. The parent representatives were regarded as promoting an education system that served the academically elite student population and which reflected the middle-class tertiary qualified professional parents' interests. In this way, many of the EDWA administrators drew a discursive boundary between parent representatives they regarded as legitimate and illegitimate. Unrepresentative parents were positioned outside of the participatory discourse and were constructed as elitist, self-interested and out of touch with the real community. This was conveyed to me by one of the EDWA administrators in the following way:

I would never say the Bunbury community didn't like *LAEP* ... I don't think it was the community at all. It was half a dozen representatives ... half a dozen representatives didn't and resisted it ... these were educated people, highly educated people who had come through a school system, gone through the TEE [Tertiary Entrance Examination] ... they really had no time for these other kids who weren't academics. I don't think at any time they really engaged in what is

the best for the community of Bunbury. I don't think we ever got engaged in that. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

Another senior EDWA administrator also drew a discursive boundary when he viewed parents with a history of social activism as problematic and not representative of what might be interpreted as an unproblematic, homogeneous school community:

I recall it attracted some interesting people into the process, the sorts of people and I've actually seen it on television in recent times lined up about the forests. I mean these people tend to take a view ... they want government to be small in a sense that the local will prevail ... one of them in particular was notorious, he was known as being a protestor and vocal and tended in a meeting context to be very vocal. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 19, 2004)

One parent echoed similar concerns to the EDWA officials and challenged the legitimacy and representativeness of the other parent representatives. From his perspective, the professional elite parents silenced the *ordinary* parents or *real* parents. In his own words:

Most of the parents were educated people. Educated people believe in education. Most people that go to uni and people like that, leave school, go to uni, come out, become teachers or professors or doctors or lawyers. Most of those people have no idea what it's like not to want to be at school and not want to be educated ... so there wasn't any real input from parents ... only from educators or educated people ... educated people who really didn't want to know about kids not wanting to be there. They were worried about TEE courses and what the school could offer to them and what they were going to lose. Most parents just found it too daunting, too hard. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004)

While the EDWA administrators generally questioned the legitimacy of the parent group to represent their school communities, there were other interests within the broader community who rejected this construction. One of the local politicians claimed that, when EDWA officials were confronted with a “counter-public[s]” (Fraser, 1997, p. 81), it served their interests to construct parent representatives as unrepresentative, problematic and lacking the legitimacy to represent their communities. He explained this in the following way:

EDWA saw them as a mob of blockheads from the community who are objugatory - they just won't see things the right way and yet I don't think they were honestly looking at the people in that community and seeing that. There's ... he's got a bachelor degree as well, there's ... she's got a PhD or a Masters. Everyone around that

table is just as smart academically and probably, given their life experience, are probably better rounded and more widely informed than the education persons. So I don't think they really gave that group of people enough credit for seeing things intuitively and analytically quite a bit better than they themselves were seeing up in the 5th floor of the Tower. (Local politician, personal communication, December 20, 2004)

While there are many layers associated with addressing who participates in invited policy spaces, Cornwall (2002b) urges us to question from the outset how the initial inclusion and exclusion of various stakeholders is shaped by central bureaucracies in top-down policy processes. In relation to *LAEP*, one of the key principles outlined in the *LAEP Framework* is that “the needs of all students will be met” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 12). However, the document remains silent on the incorporation of the voice of special interest groups based on disability, class and race. Many of the parent representatives approached the issue of community representativeness from a reflexive posture and problematised notions of community, community representation and the lack of representation and voice of minority groups on the *LAEP* committees. This point, while made in various ways by participants, is summed up in the words of a parent:

They approached the issue of representation so simplistically ... we raised issues of representativeness at one committee meeting. Where were the Aboriginal representatives, particularly given that *LAEP* was going to affect students at our school ... we asked where was the representative for students with disabilities ... these issues were not taken on board ... despite accusations that we weren't representative of our school communities. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

Other parent representatives problematised the nature of participatory planning processes and raised similar issues to Hicks (2005) who contends that, if issues of power, space and voice are not addressed, the creation of public spaces for participation in government decision-making will be taken up by policy actors who have power and access to resources. One parent identified:

When you think about it as a public process that's not what the community looks like. It's a small percentage of the community. I used to think to myself, how come it's got to be such a process that the only people who can survive in it to any degree are people like us. In many ways that's as closed and excluding as anything else. Sometimes it was like watching a small group of people who were very similar arguing amongst themselves. And you could have taken a snapshot at some of those meetings and wondered how any of

them represented anything about the community. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

A similar point was made by another parent who suggested that the structuring of the representative process, not only in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) but also in practice, was simplistic and never attempted to address the complexity associated with the adoption of a local representative structure for participatory planning processes. Another parent representative commented that the issue of challenges to the representativeness of parents was problematic throughout *LAEP* because the construction of the categories of representatives in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) was “really simplistic about who would represent whom” (Parent representative, personal communication December 2, 2004). EDWA’s claims about the lack of legitimacy of the parent representatives to represent their school communities concerned another parent. This parent pointed out that EDWA personnel were over-represented on the *LAEP* committees relative to the parents. He further added that the status of the parent representatives was justified because they had been chosen by their communities because many parents felt intimidated to present a counter position to the EDWA administrators (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005).

The problematisation of and tensions underlying issues of representativeness in *LAEP* illustrate that, while the policy text can be seen as an attempt to establish a discourse of community participation, the discursive practices that emerged throughout *LAEP* were informed by certain social relations of power. As Gaventa (2004, p. 34) contends, “power relations help to shape the boundaries of participatory spaces, what is possible within them, and who may enter, with which identities, discourses and interests.” Furthermore, Barnes et al. (2004, p. 273) suggest that notions of what constitutes a participating public or school community are “social constructions, formed out of a range of discourses that are mobilised in particular ways, often by competing interests in particular historical and political contexts.” In relation to the Western Australian education system, parents and community members historically have been excluded from influencing educational decision-making and have been positioned on the periphery of educational discourse in subordinate subject positions. In *LAEP*, parents were repositioned through the social democratic participatory discourse circulated by the Minister for Education and EDWA policy elites as central to decision-making about education reform at the local level.

However, one of the great paradoxes in *LAEP* is that, while policy makers created opportunities for community participation which was biased towards participants who possessed expert knowledge and technical expertise, and the parents possessing these forms of social and cultural capital were endorsed by their school communities, EDWA administrators regarded the same group of parents as illegitimate representatives. The construction of parent participants in binary terms of *real* or not *real* parents as part of a community participation discourse can be viewed as one way EDWA representatives sought to exercise power and to retain dominance over the *LAEP* planning processes in an invited policy space. This is particularly the case when confronted with a “counter-public[s]” (Fraser, 1997, p. 81) that challenged EDWA administrators’ claims to *expert* knowledge.

To further deconstruct the contestation and tensions surrounding issues of participation in *LAEP*, particularly claims by EDWA administrators that parents participated out of self-interest, Cornwall’s (2002a) ideas about the nature of participation in invited policy spaces offer a way forward. She says that understanding how invited policy spaces are taken up, “occupied, negotiated, subverted or mediated” initially requires addressing how participants construct their motivations for participating, the expectations they hold about their “entitlements” and how these speak to the various participation discourses and the subject positions made available (Cornwall, 2002a, pp. 51-52). I now address the participants’ motivation for becoming involved in *LAEP*.

### **Why Participate?: Individual Versus Collective Interests**

While there have been a number of attempts in the literature to establish why people participate, there is very little theorising about what motivates participation or non-participation (Simmons & Birchall, 2003). Much of the recent literature explains voluntary participation either in terms of participants engaging for “individual incentives” or “collective interests” (Birchall & Simmons, 2004, p. 470). Explanations of public participation processes, which emphasise individual incentives as the basis for participation, draw a theoretical basis from the rational choice models (Olson, 1965). This approach, which also informs market views of devolution and community participation, suggests that people will not participate in collective action to achieve common goals (Whiteley, 1995) unless there are private gains, which they calculate to exceed the costs of participation.

Throughout the interviews, all participants described their backgrounds, aspects of their personality or personal and social circumstances, and their motivations for becoming involved in *LAEP*. Many of the parent and teacher representatives who had previous experiences of activism in unions, political parties, voluntary organisations, or community action initiatives reflected Simmons and Birchalls' (2003, pp. 6-7) finding that voluntary participation can be explained by blending individual incentives at the same time with collectivist values. Most of the parents interviewed believed that the combination of individual incentives and collective interests formed the basis of their participation in *LAEP*. For example, one parent told me that his motivation for becoming involved in *LAEP* "was reasonably well balanced between my role as a parent and wanting to ensure that there was a viable education system for my children and other children in the state system" (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005). A similar point was made by another parent who said that, while he was concerned about his children's education, he felt very strongly about "the future of the education system" (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004). One parent representative pointed out that, while he was currently concerned about his daughter's education, he participated in *LAEP* knowing that *LAEP* outcomes would not come into effect during her time at school (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004). Clearly, collectivistic incentives were the most powerful motivation for many participants who recognised that any structural changes to the education system resulting from *LAEP* would occur after their children had finished high school. There was generally a strong identification with a sense of community, whether it was representing their colleagues in the case of teacher representatives or for parents representing their school communities.

For a number of participants, collectivist interests, such as the importance of valuing the notion of community, dissatisfaction with broader social norms and the important role that schools play in the community motivated their involvement in *LAEP* rather than individual incentives derived from rational choice theory. These ideas were conveyed by a number of parent and teacher representatives who spoke about the importance of planning for educational services in a holistic way which addressed the relationships between schools and the community. In the words of one parent:

I have always maintained that the school system has a very important role to play beyond the school gate ... I was very interested in



ensuring that the policy position of the Education Department was appropriately integrated with other areas of government activity, including issues of heritage, sport and recreation and dealing with the many issues that are emerging with youth, for example, drugs and alcohol and crime and those sorts of things. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

### ***Resisting being done to***

For some participants, the origins of their motivation for participating in *LAEP* lay in commitments to social activism in community based issues as well as their professional backgrounds. Some of these parents volunteered to formally represent their school communities after the *LAEP* process had commenced. Their motivation for participating can be understood as an expression of “oppositional consciousness” (Mansbridge, 2001, pp. 4-5) in response to a perception that was circulating within their social networks that the *LAEP* process was undemocratic and that there was a hidden agenda to close two of the local schools. One parent told me that she volunteered to be the *LAEP* representative for her school community because of what she had heard about *LAEP*. She also attended a meeting as an observer with EDWA District and Central office representatives to discuss the consultation process on the *Draft LAEP Options Plan*. She explained:

I remember going to the August meeting in the Tower. I found that meeting really tense ... here we are with this disastrous process that needed to be subverted ... the whole thing was going to be wound up by November [1998] and it was all about closing Bunbury High. The intent was to close down democracy and people having a voice ... so I got permission from [my school P & C] ... to be the representative on the *LAEP* process. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

According to a number of other parent representatives, some time after the *LAEP* process commenced, a rumour circulated that two schools were going to close. One parent told me that she volunteered to be one of the *LAEP* representatives because she was concerned about these rumours and the lack of information about these issues in the public arena. She explained:

There were rumours going around that the school was also a subject of attention around the *LAEP* ... people were coming to me privately and talking about it and wanting some answers about these rumours. So my motivation was a sense of outrage that something that was really important to me was suddenly going to shift in front of me without public comment or debate. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

Unlike most of the other parent representatives who expressed collectivist values for participating in *LAEP*, one parent whose children attended one of the primary schools expressed more individual incentives associated with rational choice theory. He rejected the notion that parents with children currently in the school system should plan for future generations. From his perspective, the only parents who should participate were those whose children would be the recipients of the changes (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004).

While the engagement of EDWA representatives with *LAEP* was a professional requirement, many of them clearly stated that their interest in *LAEP* outcomes was not motivated by individual interest or personal agendas but by concerns for the notion of education serving “collective” rather than primarily “individual” interests (Reid, 2003, p. 3). An EDWA administrator explained to me that his “only set agenda is to ... come out at the end of it with good options for kids ... my personal view isn’t really very significant” (EDWA administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005).

All of the participants’ motivation for their participation in *LAEP* reflect a more complex picture than either self interest, as suggested by a market discourse, or collectivist ends, as reflected in a social democratic discourse of participation. Rather, participants’ explanations of their motivation for participating in *LAEP* are forged in the interaction between their personal experiences, the social networks in which they have been engaged, their values, aspects of their personal identity and cultural values conducive to participatory processes. Hence, while many of the participants brought with them considerable experience and knowledge, as well as commitments to social justice values, individual concerns and interests were also woven through their explanations. However, parent and teacher representatives drew on different identities when explaining their motivations. Through their identity as a parent and educational service user, concerns were expressed about ensuring that their child’s educational needs were being met. Their identities as professionals, active citizens and parents, meant that their motivation for participating extended beyond their personal incentives to incorporate more collectivist concerns which related to acting collectively to influence the direction of educational services for future generations. In this regard, the subject position of *participant* within the participatory discourses drawn on by parents and teachers was primarily concerned with issues of social agency, voice and influence rather than meeting individual service requirements. It is against this more complex understanding of participants’ motivations

for becoming involved in *LAEP* that I explore the nature of their initial expectations about participating in an invited policy space and the lived experience of participating in *LAEP*.

### **Taking Up Participatory Spaces: Expectations and Entitlements**

Cornwall (2002a, p. 51) says to understand how and why people participate in community planning processes requires that we not only take a closer look at how participants are constructed in discourses of participation, but also how they construct their own engagement and “entitlements” in the spaces they are given. To address this issue, I discuss what expectations participants from all stakeholder groups had about the nature of their social agency in relation to exercising influence over the *LAEP* planning process and outcomes and their lived experience. To represent participants’ experiences of participating in *LAEP*, I draw on Arnstein’s (1969, p. 217) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* as a heuristic to help locate their anticipated and actual levels of participation (see Appendix 13). This approach goes some way towards understanding the discordance between the way in which policy elites promoted public participation in *LAEP* and the contestation that emerged in relation to parent representativeness and control over *LAEP* decision-making at the local level.

As Bowe et al. (1992) contend, policy actors confront texts such as the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) not as “naïve readers” but with:

... histories, with experience, with values and purposes of their own, they have vested interests in the meaning of the policy. Policies will be interpreted differently as the histories, experiences, values, purposes and interests which make up any arena differ ... Furthermore, ... interpretation is a matter of struggle. (p. 22)

Hence, as Cornwall (2004a, p. 85) suggests, when a participatory space is created, it “quickly comes to be filled with expectations, relationships, institutions and meanings that have been brought from elsewhere, and which impinge upon expectations of how that space will be experienced.” With these ideas in mind, I pursued with participants what expectations they held about their participation and the level of influence or social agency they might exercise in the *LAEP* planning process.

Unlike recent approaches that contend that the types of participation should reflect the objectives of government officials (Shand & Arnberg, 1996; J. Thomas, 1993b), Arnstein’s (1969) typology reflects the critical intent of my study, which acknowledges

the converging relationship between democracy, citizenship and power relations in participatory policy making processes. For democratic theorists like Arnstein, attention to issues of voice and the extent of a participant's power and influence in policy processes is seen as essential for meaningful citizenship. Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* offers a classification of participation mechanisms and a value-judgment about the exercising of power in policy processes and plots participation along a line from token consultation at one end, to full citizen control of an issue at the other end. As planning processes travel across the spectrum, so the degree of participation increases from the perfunctory to the meaningful. Such an approach acknowledges, therefore, the ambiguities in defining participation as well as making participation not just a single act but a scale of possibilities. The eight significant graduations of citizen participation are represented by the eight rungs of the *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, which are divided into three groups. At the bottom level, the first two rungs, *manipulation* and *therapy*, are identified as *non-participation*. The next three rungs, *informing*, *consultation* and *placation* are identified as degrees of *tokenism*. At the top level, *partnership*, *delegated power* and *citizen control* are identified as degrees of *citizen power*. Within the top level, *partnership* is not considered as strong as *delegated power* or *citizen control* (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217).

During the interviews, I showed each participant a copy of Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* and discussed the nature of participation according to each of the eight rungs of the Ladder. I then asked participants whether they could match their initial expectations about participating in *LAEP* with any of Arnstein's eight levels of participation. Participants were also given the opportunity to modify Arnstein's *Ladder of Citizen Participation* to reflect their experience. Their responses were grouped to illustrate the commonalities and differences within and between stakeholder groups.

### ***Anticipating a partnership and exercising social agency***

For community representatives there were two consistent themes that emerged from the data. First, the *LAEP* documentation or discussions with senior EDWA administrators had played a role in informing many of the participants' views about the nature of community participation in *LAEP* and, second, all participants held expectations of exercising a high level of social agency in relation to the nature of the process and the outcomes. In most cases, the community representatives identified *partnership* as

representing their understanding of the nature of community participation in *LAEP*. While there were variations within this stakeholder group as to what *partnership* meant in practice, nonetheless, there was agreement that participatory processes challenged existing power structures and relationships between EDWA and parent representatives. For a number of parents, this entailed the redistribution of power to facilitate the inclusion of participants through sharing of planning and decision-making responsibilities. These ideas were explained to me in the following way by one parent:

The intent of the *LAEP* document was partnership ... partnership is a very clear statement of the distribution of power. It is about saying you are going to give someone else, or some other entity, a clear role in decision-making so you are actually allocating power to those people to influence outcomes. That is how partnerships work. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

A number of other parent representatives also understood *partnership* to mean power was *delegated* to parent representatives to make decisions about educational outcomes in Bunbury. From this perspective, parents and citizens achieve dominant decision-making authority relative to EDWA representatives (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). This expectation was expressed by one parent when she said:

If they say that we're a democracy and that they will listen to us why can't we have what we want? I can't see why the Government should then tell us how our schools should be run. So there's a role for partnership and delegated power and citizen control. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004)

While other parent representatives stated categorically that the parents should have *delegated* power to determine *LAEP* outcomes for Bunbury, another parent representative was more reserved in her comments about her interpretation of the role of community participation in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a). While she saw the document as reflecting a social democratic discourse of community participation, she also felt that, at the same time, *LAEP* was designed to legitimate a process aimed at education restructuring. In her own words:

I believed that document. I think it did have a kind of social democratic philosophy in that we're all partners in the social contract of our society and that we all have a vested interest in what our schools look like and how they operate. I think also though it had an undercurrent which you often get in social democracies that actually if you don't engage people then you're going to have trouble so it had a placating undertone. So I saw the document itself as sitting

somewhere between partnership and placation. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

This parent also commented that the *LAEP Framework* (1997a) contradicted her understanding of *partnership* as the basis for community participation:

In a democratic society you can understand that probably the Minister is ultimately responsible for the state of schools. I think what a lot of us in the process failed to do, and I think this would have helped much earlier, is to look at this concept of partnership. Is it a contradiction in terms or an oxymoron to talk about a partnership when you've got ultimate ministerial decision-making? It said in the document very clearly it [the *LAEP* outcome] is ultimately a ministerial decision. I think people thought it's somehow our voices that would make the ultimate decision. I think that's the ultimate contradiction of the intention of partnership. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

Like the parent representatives, the teacher and local school administrators also expected that there would be a *partnership* between EDWA representatives and the community. One EDWA school administrator explained that he agreed with the model of participation outlined in the *LAEP* planning process and that he genuinely believed that “there would be a partnership and significant input from the community” (EDWA school administrator, personal communication, October 28, 2004).

### ***Lived experience of participation: Manipulation and non-participation***

To further deconstruct the participants' experience of *LAEP* and the associated tensions and contestation, I again drew on Arnstein's (1969, p. 217) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* during the interviews and asked participants to locate their level of participation relative to their original expectations. This approach enabled me to unravel the competing participatory discourses throughout the enactment of *LAEP* which are, as Kesby (2003, p. 5) says, “powerfully productive of ... subject positions; principally that of participant” and “govern the possibilities of behaviour” and the exercise of social agency or influence within a policy space. While the social democratic discourse emphasises active citizenship and participant empowerment for determining collective decisions, the corporate managerialist approach positions the participant as a user of education services who is, as Rizvi (1993, p. 3) says, consulted and “managed” in education decision-making. The market approach, while often found in tandem with the managerialist approach, positions the participant as a client or consumer of education

services who participates through exercising “choice” (Rizvi, 1993, p. 4) from a range of education services.

The anger and disillusionment of most of the parent and school representatives was prompted by their view of *LAEP* as a process that the Coalition State Government and senior EDWA officials were using to legitimate a change agenda in Bunbury rather than engage in authentic community participation. Without exception, these participants located their level of participation in the formal *LAEP* planning process as a form of *non-participation* on Arnstein’s (1969, p. 217) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*. While many participants spoke about *tokenism* and *placation*, it was *manipulation*, which is located at the lower limits of *non participation* on Arnstein’s (1969, p. 217) *Ladder of Citizen Participation*, that the majority of parent and school representatives considered reflected their experience of participation. As Arnstein (1969) explains, *manipulation* is where:

In the name of citizen participation, people are placed in rubberstamp advisory committees ... for the express purpose of engineering their support. Instead of genuine citizen participation, the bottom rung of the ladder signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by power-holders. (p. 218)

Most of the parent and school representatives repeatedly said that they believed EDWA had a pre-determined change agenda that EDWA officials sought to legitimate and to implement through *LAEP*. They further stated that, because this agenda was questioned at the local level, to secure the legitimacy to proceed with education restructuring EDWA administrators needed to engineer and manipulate the consent of local people. This was explained by a school administrator:

I became thoroughly disillusioned with the Central Office ... with the bureaucratic process that pretended to listen and take notice of parents and communities and, in fact, didn't. That particular process was corrupt, there's no other word for it, it was a corrupt process that was going to get an intended outcome by hook or by crook ... what happened, I don't think it's on the scale. (School administrator, personal communication, October 28, 2004)

Teacher representatives also expressed the view that the EDWA administrators were trying to manipulate the Secondary Drafting Committee process to achieve a change agenda in Bunbury that involved introducing a senior campus and middle schools. One

teacher commented that, because of EDWA's hidden agenda, the process and community participation had to be manipulated:

It seemed to me fairly early on that there was an agenda being pushed ... so I was quite cynical about it because I felt it was being managed in a way that was leading us to one conclusion that most people seemed to be resisting. It was clear we were being shepherded that way. There were people with agendas to push and that process didn't meet those agendas. The process had to be manipulated somewhere along the line. (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 7, 2004)

One of the local school administrator's dissatisfaction with his level of influence throughout the *LAEP* process originated from his sense of betrayal arising from his perception that EDWA had an undisclosed agenda and the way the community participation had been manipulated. He told me:

I think the thing that got me was that it was put to us that it was going to be a review of the delivery of secondary education in the greater Bunbury area. They [EDWA] weren't up front with people. Why they went through the agony of community consultation when they felt strongly for a senior campus model ... I sort of get the feeling that it had all been pre-arranged. The whole exercise was just to give it some credibility with the Government or the Education Department so that they can say 'look we have consulted with the public and this is what they want'. (Senior EDWA educator, personal communication, November 30, 2004)

Most of the parents expressed the view that *LAEP* represented a blatant manipulation of information and the negation of and a disregard for participants' views:

It's a classic case of top-down planning, but also then trying to force it onto the community when there was resistance. I can't think of a case of planning and a worse case of manipulation of consultation being used just to disguise a preconceived plan being rammed through as fast and specifically as possible. I would have to say that manipulation was one of the key features of this document ... so there was a lot of non-participation in this. (Parent representative, personal communication, March 5, 2005)

Another parent representative described the nature of social agency or level of citizen power in the formal *LAEP* planning process as *non-participation*, with *manipulation* as characterising the relationship between EDWA administrators and school communities. She explained this in the following way:



I had no doubt that it was being driven in practice by a process of manipulation. It's something that we can manage and control, that's how I think they [EDWA] saw it. That was one of the first times I witnessed up close the real intent on the part of government to manipulate. But to be so blatant and arrogant and in your face, and to pass something off as a democratic process when clearly the intent was to ignore us and to actually do something that would be to our disadvantage. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

One of the parent representatives, while identifying *manipulation* as the primary form of *non-participation* in the formal *LAEP* planning process, also identified the masking of the political nature of the planning process and the conflicting interpretations of partnership. This meant that the inherent contradictions in the planning document would surface in practice and would have to be managed by EDWA. She explained:

I saw the document itself as sitting somewhere between partnership and placation. I think the escalation in animosity was about the resentment that the community would not play its role. I got more and more aggrieved about a rubber stamping role and the feeling that I was constantly put in a position of not being prepared to do that. In these kinds of community consultations power at the end of the day is unwilling to be moved. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

### **Constraints on Participation: The Ideology of Expertism**

The responses from the Central and District office EDWA administrators regarding their expectations of participating in *LAEP* reflect G. Anderson's (1998, p. 572) observations that the discourse of community participation in education decision-making has become "hegemonic" and elevated to "common sense" status where overt challenges to the rhetoric are rare. In a similar way to the parent representatives, most of the senior District and Central Office EDWA administrators emphasised the importance and value of parent participation in the planning process. One senior EDWA administrator stated:

What *LAEP* did was give the opportunity for local people including parents to be part of the planning process. That's exciting because I know that the local people can add value to the outcome. I believe they were the strengths and that's what we built in. (Senior EDWA administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

Lewis and Naidoo (2004) observe that, while different interests appear to support the notion of community participation, it is often only through the exploration of how participants interpret participatory discourses in practice that tensions, contradictions and

competing ideologies, which are masked by the rhetoric, begin to surface. In the case of *LAEP*, while most of the senior administrators and parent representatives identified the relationship between EDWA and the Committee members as a *partnership*, this took on a different meaning in practice. While social democratic discourses of community participation generally informed most of the parent and school representatives' ideas about participation in *LAEP*, it was corporate managerialist discourses that shaped senior EDWA administrators' expectations of the nature of community participation in practice. That is, despite most of the parent and teacher representatives describing the nature of the participatory relationship as a *partnership*, the key participatory mechanism for eliciting parents', as well as school administrators' and teachers', perspectives was *consultation*. As Arnstein (1969, p. 217) suggests, consultation implies that citizens will "hear and be heard", however, this does not imply that they influence decision-making. This point was also emphasised by most of the senior Central and District Office administrators who said that community representatives should not exercise power or authority in relation to the nature of the *LAEP* process or outcomes. One senior administrator told me that *LAEP* needed to be managed carefully so that the parent and school representatives "didn't overstep their boundaries" and assume a decision-making role. He elaborated:

They certainly participate but they don't control ... it's a partnership, but we don't delegate power. When I talk about partnership, I mean that the community members, including the staff of the schools, have a role in informing the debate and adding value by their knowledge of a local area. Consultation doesn't mean making the decision, it means they want you to have a go ... they [the community] certainly don't control it ... but there was a role for the community to play in the planning process. (Senior EDWA administrator, personal communication, November 22, 2004)

Research undertaken by Callaghan and Wistow (2006) and Vincent (1996), suggests that, in participatory policy processes or invited policy spaces where bureaucrats assume a position of dominance derived from a perception of an institutional power base, rarely is there a level of reflection or structural analysis which questions whether fundamental cultural change, or the reconfiguring of relationships are needed in order to engage with the public effectively. The breakdown in the *LAEP* process was attributed by an EDWA official to the community misinterpreting the *LAEP* principles and their understanding of their level of influence over the decision-making process. Most of the senior EDWA administrators, rather than discuss their level of influence or exercise of power in *LAEP*, primarily framed their comments in terms of the way that school and parent

representatives misunderstood the nature of their participation in *LAEP*. One EDWA representative from the Central Office explained that he was:

... constantly concerned about the way people interpreted the *LAEP* policy because some of the people involved had the feeling that what they decided was going to be it ... what ever you said didn't matter. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

One of the local EDWA senior administrators was also very clear that there were limited opportunities for parent and school representatives to exercise social agency in *LAEP*. His view reflects the “centralising/decentralising tension” (Lingard, 1996, p. 73) associated with a corporate managerialist ideology that promotes participation at the local level and, at the same time, the control of policy decision-making by a centralised elite group of bureaucrats. The administrator explained:

Well I suppose I don't think that communities have decision-making power ... the Minister will make the decision based on the District Director's report. It was very clear that they didn't have any power other than to talk and to raise issues and to give points of view which Ministers need to respond to in that political process. But, no, they had no decision-making power in the policy. (Senior local EDWA administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

In the interviews it became apparent that senior EDWA administrators held a number of assumptions about their roles and influence that were consistent with a corporate managerialist ideology. In particular, the senior EDWA administrators assumed a position of dominance in the decision-making process in *LAEP* that reflected the “ideology of expertism” (I. Young, 1990, p. 80). That is, rather than constructing *LAEP* as a relational and deliberative process, decision-making was seen as the exclusive right of a small group of professionals who retained the sole exercise of power to pronounce matters within their sphere of expertise. This was evident when a senior administrator stated that policy decisions require the advice of experts not citizens. He told me that one of the problems with *LAEP* is:

What you are doing is you're involving a mixture of people. Some people haven't got a clue what they're talking about. You're asking them to make major decisions on something they're not experienced in. They're just people off the street. The process that they're using is flawed. It's flawed because, if you're going to make a decision about the progressive side of things in society, you can't use amateurs to do it. They just haven't got the background. I'm not having a go at them. They just haven't got the background and the knowledge. You've

got amateurs making professional decisions. (Senior Central Office EDWA administrator, personal communication, April 2, 2005)

Drawing on a corporate managerialist discourse, another Central Office administrator depoliticised the contestation in relation to community participation, which he identified as a technical problem that could be *fixed* by making amendments to the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a). He stated:

With hindsight we would have highlighted the fact that we give parents the opportunity to be part of the planning process and we will consult and this is what consultation means. The phrase in the *LAEP* document terms of reference says, 'the Drafting Committee will assist the District Director to develop a draft local plan'. If we had time again, we would change that phrase to say something like 'the District Director is responsible for writing the draft plan with the assistance of the Drafting Committee' rather than 'when the Drafting Committee is satisfied it has met the terms of reference', so that's wrong. We shouldn't have said that. We should have said 'when the District Director is satisfied' ... to make it very clear who has responsibility here, who's holding the pen ... consultation doesn't mean making the decision, it means they want you to have a go. (Senior Central Office EDWA administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

For parent and school representatives, the idea of partnership meant that there should be collective decision-making about *LAEP* outcomes at the local level. This challenged the EDWA administrators' power and centralised decision-making authority. The idea of partnership for senior Central Office EDWA administrators meant consultation at the local level without any community authority and influence over policy outcomes. These views reflect a corporate managerialist approach where the *LAEP* planning and consultation processes are devolved to the local level. At the same time, there is a re-centralisation and ministerialisation of decision-making via a policy process of "steering at a distance" (Kickert, 1995, p. 135). *LAEP* represents a paradox in the sense that, while policy makers created opportunities for participation in *LAEP* that demanded professionalism and expert knowledge, which is characteristic of a technocratic rational planning process, they also have an image of participants as amateurs which is expressed through the "ideology of expertism" (I. Young, 1990, p. 80).

## SUMMARY

This chapter has illustrated that, while the discourses of devolution and community participation were promoted as key strategies to review the provision of public education

in Bunbury, throughout the enactment of *LAEP*, tensions, contradictions and competing participatory ideologies emerged that were masked by the participatory rhetoric. The participants' expectations and experiences of their participation in the *LAEP* process confirm G. Anderson's (1989, p. 574) view that, as a "*floating signifier*", participation can stand for practices which are participatory as well as those that are antithetical to participation. While the government policy elites drew on a social democratic discourse to promote community participation in *LAEP*, this was [re]constructed through a corporate managerialist view by the EDWA administrators who identified the level of influence of the community in *LAEP* as *consultation*, which is a form of non-participation (Arnstein, 1969). In contrast, the parent and teacher representatives mostly reflected a social democratic view of participation and identified *partnership* as representing their understanding of the nature of community participation in *LAEP*, a view that suggests a relational view of power to facilitate the deliberate inclusion of participants through sharing planning and decision-making responsibilities in *LAEP*.

The tensions associated with the participatory practices at the middle-range and micro levels of the policy trajectory in *LAEP* were informed by certain discursive and structural relations of power which both constrained and enabled participation. The interviews with participants reveal that senior EDWA administrators held a number of assumptions about their roles and level of influence which were consistent with a corporate managerialist ideology. In particular the EDWA administrators expressed the "ideology of expertism" (I. Young, 1990, p. 80) whereby decision-making in *LAEP* was constructed as the exclusive right of EDWA policy elites. When the claims to expert knowledge and the exclusivity of EDWA decision-making was challenged by predominantly middle-class, tertiary educated, professional parent participants, the EDWA administrators sought to control and "manage" (Rizvi, 1993, p. 3) the participation through constructing the parent representatives as *unrepresentative* of *real* or *average* parents. The commentary by EDWA administrators regarding the inclusion/exclusion of parent representativeness in *LAEP* represents a paradox particularly given the dominance of the corporate managerialist, participatory discourse and planning process promoted by EDWA administrators.

Drawing on the interaction of Bourdieu's (1984) concepts of habitus, capital and field, I argue that, in an education system or political field where corporate managerialist discourses have institutionalised the value of educational decision-making based on

technocratic information and rational policy processes, the social and cultural capital required to participate in the *LAEP* planning process was biased toward middle-class professionally qualified and knowledgeable actors. This enabled professional parents to exercise power/knowledge through the construction of a professional parent discourse that made claims about their legitimacy to represent others. Hence, the managerialist discourses circulating in the political field had exclusionary effects to the extent that non-tertiary educated, professional parents were marginalised and self excluded from representing their school communities in *LAEP*.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## CONSTRUCTING THE PROBLEM WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I explore how the State Government constructed the problems with the local senior high schools to build and legitimate an agenda to change the provision of education services in Bunbury. The focus is on the process of active interpretation and meaning-making of the *LAEP Framework* (1997a) in practice in relation to the politics and effects of social problem construction, representation and legitimization by stakeholders at different sites of the policy process. Of interest is the manner in which global discourses, which justify the need to reform and restructure public education, are reflected and articulated in the *LAEP* policy texts and how these discourses are interpreted and applied to Bunbury schools by actors at different policy sites within the EDWA. Of significance, also is how the local community and their *LAEP* representatives deconstructed, contested and reframed the discourses about the problems with the local high schools circulated by state policy elites.

To address the issue of social problem construction in *LAEP*, this chapter comprises three main sections. The first section discusses how the Western Australian Government framed the problems with public education in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b), the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) and the *Brochure* (EDWA, 1997e), and how these policy documents reflect global discourses that justify education restructuring. I also address how the global and national education restructuring discourses, within which the State Government located the problems with public education in Western Australia, constrain the nature of the problems and the solutions posed. The second section presents participants' stories about how the problems with the local senior high schools were defined and identifies where the blame for the problems with the local schools was located. The final section discusses the EDWA administrators' proposed solutions to the problems with the local schools and how these solutions were deconstructed and contested throughout the *LAEP* process by other stakeholders.

Reflective of contemporary approaches to critical policy analysis, this study is premised on the notion that policy issues and problems are socially constructed (Bacchi, 2000) across a number of policy contexts which influence the way policy problems or issues are defined (Ball, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992; Taylor et al., 1997; Vidovich, 2001). In other words, the discourses in which the state locates policy problems and solutions circulate in other policy contexts and limit the way in which the problems are thought about and the nature of the solutions posed (R. Atkinson, 2000; Bacchi, 2000; Hajer, 1993).

To address the issues associated with the construction of the problems with public education, I draw on the following theoretical ideas from the different levels of the CPTF. At the macro structural level the organising ideas include the extent to which:

- the discourses about the problems and solutions posed for local senior high schools reflect global and national discourses which justify educational change; and
- the state as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360) is “strategically selective” (Jessop, 1990, pp. 9-10) in promoting specific forms of action and discourses about education restructuring.

At the middle-range agenda-building level the following ideas are relevant:

- the extent to which discourses developed at the macro state level take on greater immediacy throughout agenda-building processes at the local level;
- the manner in which discourses are used to frame policy problems and to steer the restructure of education so that particular solutions are legitimated at the local level; and
- the potential effects of the problem definition process on different local groups based on class, ethnicity or disability.

At the micro level of the lived experience of the policy process the following ideas are relevant:

- policy texts contain both “readerly” and “writerly” (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12) characteristics which provide spaces for contesting interpretations of problem definition processes in local sites; and
- inconsistencies and contradictions in the official discourses about the need for education restructuring offer opportunities for resistance, problem deconstruction and reconstruction at the local level.



As a way forward, I identify how the problems with and the justification for education restructuring were constructed by the State in the *LAEP* policy texts.

## **THE PROBLEMS WITH WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION: *LAEP* POLICY TEXTS**

The documents accompanying the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), which include the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b), the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) and the *Brochure* (EDWA, 1997e), detail the perceived problems with the Western Australian education system that needed addressing through *LAEP* at the local level. In the section *Context for Planning*, which is the preamble to the six *Improvement Initiatives* (of which *LAEP* is one) outlined in the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d), the case for educational reform is developed through the promotion of the various forces and effects of globalisation as a legitimating discourse for educational change. The preamble commences by stating that “in common with many other communities, the State will enter the next century responding to the following trends.” These trends include:

- a diverse economy reliant on high levels of information and skills to add value to the resource base;
- a less predictable future, where the environment changes quickly and where the demand for mobility is greater;
- increased competition and involvement with other systems, states and countries;
- increasing dependence on electronic/digital forms of technology; and
- a drive for continuous rethinking and improvement based on high quality learning. (EDWA, 1997d, p. 4)

In a similar vein to the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d), the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b) details the challenges to the way in which post-compulsory schooling is provided in Western Australia. A discussion paper authored by the centrally based Local Area Education Planning Unit, titled *Issues Relating to Post-Compulsory Education in Western Australia* (1997) (Local Area Education Planning Unit, 1997), identifies the following pressures for education restructuring.

*The need for a skilled workforce.* The paper states:

Over the past decade it has been increasingly apparent that Australia needs to be globally competitive if we are to maintain our standards of living. To be globally competitive we need a highly skilled work force, one that continually improves its skill base. The process starts at school. In the modern economy, young people without skills will not be employable ... employers require students who can demonstrate Key Competencies. In addition, students will need to show their ability to develop some specific work skills in work related contexts. Industry is saying employability is enhanced when students have demonstrable competencies. (Local Area Education Planning Unit, 1997, pp. 10-11)

*The need for Western Australian schools to be competitive.* The paper states:

Government schools [are] now functioning in a highly competitive market ... if government schools are not competitive, they will lose out in the student market place, which will not only affect funding for government schools but also the very nature of the government schooling system. (Local Area Education Planning Unit, 1997, p. 10)

*The need for the Western Australian education system to use resources effectively.* To use resources effectively, the education system needs to “respond effectively to the new industry challenges” which make it “necessary to minimize duplication and overlap of services.” In this regard “quality and cost become inseparable” (Local Area Education Planning Unit, 1997, p. 11).

Thus the *LAEP* documents exemplify Ball’s (1998a, p. 127) observation that it is common in many western nations to find policy documents in which it is “the ‘problems’ with globalisation which frame and ‘produce’ the contemporary problems of public education.” Reflective of Ball’s (1998) observation, embedded in the pressures for change in the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d), the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b) and the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a), are assertions about the problems confronting public education systems which have been brought about by the knowledge economy, global markets, international competitiveness and the information age. Collectively, all these factors constitute “a neo-liberal global discourse of economic change which represents ‘globalisation’ as a fact which demands ‘adjustments’ and ‘reforms’ to enhance ‘efficiency’ ...” and competitiveness in education for nations to compete internationally (Fairclough cited in Taylor, 2004, p. 440 ). The effects of policy documents such as the *Plan* (EDWA, 1997d) and the *Resource File* (EDWA, 1997b), which make truth claims in relation to a similar set of challenges confronting other nations’ education systems, is

that they have the discursive effect of normalising the globalisation discourse so that it appears that there is no alternative than to embrace reform (Rezai-Rashti, 2003, n.p.). What we see, therefore, in the *LAEP* policy documents is how the State uncritically accepts the neo-liberal discourse of economic change and, in particular, globalisation, as a “discursively constructed master discourse” (Dudley, 1998, p. 30) that will inevitably require local educational institutional reform.

As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, from the 1980s onwards, neo-liberal discourses of “quality” education, were promoted by international organisations, such as the OECD, to guide the reform of national education systems. Many international, as well as successive Australian Federal and State Governments have drawn on similar neo-liberal quality education discourses to define the problems with and solutions for public education. Within the quality education discourse the problems with public education were constructed along the lines that schools were not educating workers to meet the needs of industry to compete in a global economy, schools were failing to provide cost-effective quality education and that there was a crisis of confidence in public education (O'Donoghue & Dimmock, 1998; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b). A key theme was that quality education should be couched in economic terms and pressure should be applied to schools for greater accountability for educational outcomes (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b, pp. 81-82).

This international discourse around quality schooling and the approaches by successive Federal and State Governments to mediate the effects of globalisation, provide an important context in which to locate and understand the nature of the problems that *LAEP* in Western Australia attempts to address. In the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a, p. 3), the Minister for Education claims that the provision of quality education requires that Western Australians “all accept that the education structures that were appropriate 20 years ago need adapting ... to allow for greater flexibility, diversity and choice in the way education is delivered” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 1). The Minister asserted that, to deliver quality education across the State of Western Australia, the following issues or problems needed to be addressed throughout the *LAEP* planning process.

### **The Effects of Increased Retention Rates**

*LAEP* is required to address the effects of increased retention rates in schools. The document explains that the present school structure was designed more than 40 years ago to provide for a large number of Years 8 to 10 students and a relatively small number of upper school students whose main aim was to attend university. A key issue in *LAEP* is whether the traditional primary/secondary school structure is relevant for schools with upper school retention rates of 65 percent (compared to 38 percent in 1983) with only a minority who intend to apply for university entrance (EDWA, 1997a, p. 9).

### **The Need to Offer Greater Curriculum Choices**

A central concern to be addressed through *LAEP* is how to offer greater curriculum choices that will enhance students' chances for achieving either employment or further education (EDWA, 1997a, pp. 9, 12). The trend toward an increased number of school leavers selecting options that do not include higher education has placed pressures on schools to provide a number of post-compulsory alternatives to the traditional university focus of curriculum. This entails schools addressing how to implement the *Curriculum Framework* (Curriculum Council of Western Australia, 1998), which requires offering a wider range of curriculum options to meet the demands of diverse groups of students without additional resources. The *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) suggests to achieve this objective to offer greater curriculum choices without additional resources, schools will need to reach a certain threshold of school size or a minimum critical mass of students. Options identified to achieve the dual aims outlined in *LAEP*, to provide a comprehensive range of curriculum choices and to maximise the efficient and effective use of facilities and other educational resources, include school amalgamations, school closures, and the creation of senior colleges and middle schools (EDWA, 1997a).

### **The Need to Improve Student Outcomes**

The *LAEP Framework* does not detail in what respect student outcomes are a problem but identifies *LAEP* as a strategy that “will assist schools to improve student outcomes ... by improved access to curriculum, specialist staff and facilities” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 10). All possible options are to be considered throughout the planning process so that *LAEP* results in resources being used effectively to reduce the duplication of curriculum

provision and educational services across an educational district. This point is made in the *LAEP Framework*:

Frequently two or three nearby secondary schools have run the same upper school subject with just a handful [of students] in each ... this is clearly not an effective use of resources and is increasingly difficult to justify when other students may be missing out on opportunities that would meet their schooling needs. (EDWA, 1997a, p. 10)

*LAEP* assumes that “using educational resources more effectively is an important part of ensuring that students continue to receive a quality education” (EDWA, 1997a, p. 10). Within this context, equality of access to resources for all students through improved efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of education in the State’s public schools is regarded as a key indicator of the provision of quality education, which will in turn lead to improved student outcomes (EDWA, 1997a, pp. 13-15).

### **The Need to be Competitive with the Private Education Sector**

The increased competition between public and private schools has led to a drift in students away from the public education sector. This has created an image problem for public schools and has raised the question of the quality of the public system relative to the private education system. The Education Department has been under pressure to restructure schools because of the drift of students to the private education system, the higher operational costs per student for smaller schools, and the resulting demand to achieve a critical mass in schools (Auditor General of Western Australia, 1998; Darbyshire, 1998).

The following inferences can be drawn from the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) about the problems with the quality and provision of public education across Western Australia:

- the current system is outdated, inflexible and lacks diversity and choice in the way educational services are delivered;
- the current educational services are not configured to maximise the effective and efficient allocation of resources;
- the increasing diversity and retention of students in upper secondary school is placing curriculum and other resource demands on schools that, in some instances, are not being met within the current schooling structure;

- the current curriculum options are not adequate to prepare students for the changing and diverse nature of the workforce;
- the ineffective and inequitable distribution of educational resources across the state of Western Australia; and
- the problems with the quality of the public education sector is increasingly attracting students to the private education system.

These problems with the Western Australian public education system are constructed within a neo-liberal view of the purpose and function of public education and promote a human capital conception of schooling, as expressed through the need to vocationalise the curriculum, increase parental choice and competition between schools, and to rationalise resources. These ideas about public education reform, as discussed in Chapter Four, can be seen as “constituting a global discourse” (Taylor & Henry, 2000, p. 501) that has been drawn on by many western countries in the endeavour to improve the quality of public education. The primary role of education from this perspective is to produce a “multiskilled” workforce that is “flexible and adaptive to rapid change and uncertainty” in a competitive global market-place (Henry et al., 2001, p. 99).

Having identified how neo-liberal discourses circulating at the macro level of the policy trajectory framed the need for education restructuring in the *LAEP* policy texts, I now explore the lived experience of the *LAEP* participants in the construction and deconstruction of the problems with the provision of public education in Bunbury.

## **THE PROBLEM WITH THE LOCAL PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS**

The agenda-building literature suggests that, once an issue has reached formal or government agenda status, much of the conflict over the definition of the problem subsides. The assumption is, therefore, that the political conflict in policy making occurs in the debate over which problems are to be addressed. The remaining policy making activity focuses on identifying and choosing solutions, and finding ways to implement those solutions. There is, however, limited commentary to explain what, if anything, occurs between the time policy makers decide to deal with a problem and the identification of the solutions to address the problem (Clark, 1995). In practice, as Bacchi (1999) suggests, quite often the way the problem or issue is initially perceived or defined is quite different from the way it is perceived once solutions are sought. It is important, therefore, to explore how the *LAEP* policy issues are constructed, and framed, which

issues are legitimated, how counter discourses are constructed as well as the interests activated in the process. To achieve this, I want to “dig beneath surface appearances” (L. Harvey, 1990, p. 14) to deconstruct the way the problems with educational services across Western Australia are constructed in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and other documents, to understand how these broader problems were interpreted and applied in Bunbury. In other words, I explore the extent to which discourses developed at the macro state level about the need for educational change take on greater immediacy throughout the agenda-building and problem construction process at the local level. Through questioning what problems or issues the *LAEP* process needed to address locally, I identify how, why and by whom the issues came to be defined as a problem, and how this limited the nature of the solutions posed.

In the interviews, the *LAEP* stakeholder groups present contested views of the problem with the provision of secondary education in Bunbury. The EDWA District and Central Office administrative representatives’ accounts of the problems with the senior high schools reflect the global discourses then circulating about the need for education restructuring, as well as the broader concerns with the State secondary education system that were outlined in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and accompanying documents. Most of the non-teacher, teacher and parent representatives tended not to define or identify problems with the secondary schools. They did, however, deconstruct and challenge the way many of the EDWA administrators constructed the problems with public education within a “discourse of derision” (Ball, 1994a, p. 39) about the management, quality and performance of the senior high schools in Bunbury. I elaborate on these issues below.

### **We’re Losing Students to the Private Sector: EDWA Administrators**

Throughout the 1980s, changes to public education systems in many western nations were often occurring within the context of a crisis or, as Berliner and Biddle (1995, p. 4) say, a “manufactured crisis”, over standards which facilitated a lack of public confidence in public schools in many developed countries (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998b). Consistent with the crisis discourse in relation to the quality and performance of public education circulating at the global and national government levels, one of the initial problems identified at the local level in Bunbury was that the public senior high schools were

increasingly losing students to the private education system because of the poor performance and quality of the public schools.

In discussing the drift in students from public to private schools in Australia and, in particular, the changing class attachments and loyalties in the public education system, Campbell (2005, p. 20) suggests that it is important to understand the relationships between neo-liberal economic and social policies of consumer choice, competition between educational service providers and the funding of Australian schools. In an environment where increases in government educational funding have gone almost completely to independent schools (Morgan, 2000; Reid, 2000), there has been an increasing drift of students from the public to the private schooling system (M. Angus & Olney, 1998; Marginson, 1997b; Morrow, Blackburn, & Gill, 1998; Reid, 2003; Reid & Thomson, 2003; Ryan & Watson, 2004). In 1998, as part of an election promise, the Western Australian State Government boosted grants to private schools by 25 percent despite the Education Department's deficit of \$25 million (A. Burns, 1998, May 29, p. 10). The growth of non-government school enrolments in Western Australia in 1998 exceeded the growth in government school enrolments, carrying on a trend that appeared in the early 1980s (Government of Western Australia, 1998, p. 353). As the private educational sector becomes increasingly buoyant, there are concerns within Australia that the government system may simply become a residual service provider catering for low-socio economic students (M. Angus, 2000; M. Angus & Olney, 1998; Kenway, Bigum, Fitzclarence, & Croker, 1993; Reid, 2000).

Within Western Australia, the policies of choice have resulted in increases in the number of places in the private education sector rather than the extension of choice for parents in government schools (M. Angus & Olney, 1998). The increasing movement of students from the public to the private education system, and the perceived issues about the quality of education provided by public schools relative to private schools, were viewed by many of the EDWA administrators as a major problem that *LAEP* needed to address in Bunbury for public schools to compete successfully in the educational market. An EDWA administrator's construction of the problem with local schools illustrates how a neo-liberal policy of educational choice, in an environment where there is a decline in



the investment in public education relative to the private sector, creates a crisis of legitimization for local public schools:

We are in a competitive environment in the State system with the private system. We haven't done well in that ... The reality is we've got a third of WA students in secondary education that are in the private system ... the disparity between the two systems is growing in terms of quality ... I can see that we're losing the fight and we're losing the best students and the best parents year by year. Most of those are the behaviourally good middle class higher achieving students. (Senior EDWA administrator, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

The perceived crisis of confidence in the quality of public education in Western Australia was seen as a key problem that *LAEP* needed to address. Rather than address the structural issues, such as funding arrangements as discussed above, an important role for *LAEP* was to find ways to abate the legitimization crisis through the improvement of the image and quality of education provided in the public system. As one of the EDWA participants explained:

Revitalising confidence in Government school education has been a very high priority ... this means improving the image of Government school education and the comparison between private sector and the government sector ..... the Minister's comment here, 'The provision of high quality government education schooling is crucial to the commitment to meeting the needs and expectations', so yeah, I think there was an element of improving the image, certainly in more recent governments. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, February 26, 2005)

### **Poor Retention, Performance and Quality**

Within the quality educational discourse, the poor retention, engagement and performance of students from the public secondary schools are identified as major problems with the public schools in Bunbury that needed to be addressed through *LAEP*. These problems are located within a school effectiveness discourse where retention rates, irrespective of the broader socio-political context, are a measure of an effective or successful school. From this perspective, the notion of quality is located within a neo-liberal discourse of accountability and efficiency (L. Angus, 1992; Henry et al., 2001) and expressed by a senior District Office administrator in the following way:

You can put it bluntly down as retention rates ... Bunbury had the lowest retention rate I think in just about all of Australia. In other words,

of the kids who started Year 8 in Bunbury, less than half of them were starting Year 12 and that's starting year 12 ... *LAEP* really as part of its premise was to engage more kids in schooling ... and whether you see that as retention rates, providing better courses, restructuring the schools to enable them to do those two things better and efficiently, whatever, that's what we had to do. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

In relation to Tertiary Entrance Examination scores (hereafter TEE), while the performance of the senior high schools was identified as average in Bunbury, this was regarded as a lesser problem by EDWA Central Office and District administrators than the poor student retention rates in Years 10 to 12. Central to the discourse of the problematic retention rates were questions about whether the schools in Bunbury were fulfilling their role of adequately preparing and training students to participate in the workforce. This human capital view of education was explained to me by a senior EDWA administrator:

Really, schools are a business, understand ... *LAEP* challenged the notion that secondary schools were best servicing their clients. There was some data that indicated state-wide that, in Western Australia, we have issues associated with retention and performance going into Year 12 but coming back into Year 11 ... however the service is configured, and it wasn't necessarily configured very differently in Bunbury to anywhere else, does it do the job it's supposed to do - engage kids, retain kids, and train kids to high performance levels. (EDWA District office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004)

The issue of low Indigenous student retention rates at one of the Bunbury senior high schools was also seen by a number of senior administrators as a major problem. While it is important to identify the dominant discourses constructing the problems with schools, of equal significance are discourses that are rendered silent (Ball, 1998b). Absent from the construction of the problems with the local schools in Bunbury by the EDWA administrators were references to the social or political context in which schools were operating, and how the socio-economic make-up of schools might impact on the school performance and retention rates of Indigenous students. Hence, neo-liberal ideology marginalises social justice discourses, which point to the broader sociological problem of the relationship of social class and school retention and achievement in public education systems (Thrupp, 1998). What we see, therefore, is the problem with the retention of Indigenous students located within a quality discourse that emphasises accountability and cost-effective factors rather than how socio-cultural factors and the educational

experience of Indigenous students affect retention rates. The problem with the performance of schools in relation to Indigenous students was based solely on quantitative measures, which were used to argue that a particular school was failing to provide a quality education to Indigenous students. These ideas were expressed by a senior EDWA administrator:

Well, I can give you some data ... [one school] had special funding for an Aboriginal enclave out there. We actually got the data, we actually looked at the retention rate for Aboriginal kids from 1996–2002 and we were putting \$100,000 a year into that. Now the Principal at the time would stand up and say we have magnificent programmes for Aboriginals, we have a huge retention rate and it's fantastic and this kid went off and did this. And there's no doubt this kid did go off and do this but the retention rates were absolutely abysmal ... the retention rates were 48 percent of kids who started Year 8 in Bunbury started Year 12, not finished Year 12, but started Year 12. At that time the national average was about 72 percent and the State average was about 67 percent. To me, that's abysmal. Not even acceptable. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

### **The Comprehensive Model is a Dinosaur and Creates Image Problems**

The emergence of market ideologies in western democracies such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia, has meant that the relevance and value of the state comprehensive high school system has been challenged. This form of schooling, aims to provide all students with access to similar educational opportunities through a standard curriculum and state employed teachers (Campbell, 2005). One of the key features of this approach to schooling, through which most Australian students access secondary education, is that it is designed to form part of a “neighbourhood” rather than service a “market” (p. 20). Ball (1994a, p. 128) observes that neo-liberal influences have meant that “the universalist, collectivist orientation of modernist comprehensive education is dammed and is being replaced by a diverse and selective, competitive and atomistic school system.” In relation to *LAEP*, the limitations of the comprehensive model of schooling were the subject of sustained criticism by most of the District and Central Office EDWA administrators in a way that reflected Ball’s ideas. EDWA administrators’ reasons for the problems with the comprehensive ideal included that it was an outdated and inflexible model of schooling that was unable to cater for the contemporary educational processes necessary to compete in the local educational market-place. Other issues were explained by a senior administrator:

Personally, I think that the comprehensive school is a dinosaur. It was planned for 50 years ago and the world has moved on since then. The notion that a comprehensive school can be all things for all people doesn't work anymore because of the diversity of the curriculum and the diversity of the education needs of the kids. There are opportunities then of saying, well, in regional centres and in the city can we have a better model of schooling? (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

One of the parent representatives recalled an EDWA District Office administrator saying that, by retaining the comprehensive model of schooling, there would be ongoing image problems with the local senior high schools because:

You're taking backwards steps ... because this is where education is going. Are you going to keep your children disadvantaged by staying in this system because we're moving on to this new system. They've used all of that stuff. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004)

In keeping with the perceived problems with the comprehensive high school model, a senior District Office EDWA administrator stated that BSHS was inadequate as a contemporary modern educational facility. He also said that this facility contributed to the public education system's image problems. One local EDWA administrator also claimed that the BSHS facilities were not adequate to facilitate contemporary effective teaching and learning processes that were now necessary to attract students and to compete in the educational market-place in Bunbury. He explained:

If you're going to do *LAEP*, you've got to look at the enrolments and the buildings. As an educational institution Bunbury was way past its use-by date ... a modern school still has classrooms but typically has a range of different learning stations or environments for kids ... now that's actually good education these days. If you're looking at an education institution for your kids, Bunbury is way back there. So, yes, the question that Bunbury Senior High School not be used as a high school any more was raised and had to be ... and whether to build a new modern school somewhere had to be raised also. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

These criticisms of BSHS were not shared by most of the teacher and parent representatives, but one parent, like the EDWA administrators, said that the school was "outdated" and was "not practical as a contemporary educational facility" (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004). Other senior administrators from the EDWA Central Office also said that, because the comprehensive senior high schools in Bunbury serviced neighbourhoods, *LAEP* needed to address how

the location and student catchment policies perpetuated inequities between the public schools. A senior administrator said that, in particular, the socio-economic status and race of the students attending one of the secondary schools in Bunbury was not only a major factor in the “poor public image” of the school but contributed to the drift in students to the private education sector:

When parents are choosing private schools, they are actually choosing who their kids don't go to school with more than any other single factor. All the discussion about values, uniform etc hides this other thing down here [Bunbury] that is the real driver. They want to choose to send their kids to a school where those other children aren't allowed to go. There is a bit of that in Bunbury when you look at the boundaries for the government schools. That's a lot of what the senior high school issue is all about. Underlying a lot of what went on in Bunbury is that [one school] is the Aboriginal school. If you abolished all the boundaries in Bunbury ... it would be interesting to see what happened. [One school] would really suffer ... they'd leave in droves. [This school] would become a repository for low socio-economic Indigenous students. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

### **There's a Lack of Choice and Diversity in the Provision of Public Education**

Neo-liberal philosophy emphasises that quality education is provided through increasing competition between the choice and diversity in the types of services offered. The lack of choice of subjects in and diversity of public schools were themes continually raised by Central and District Office EDWA administrators as reasons for problems with the quality of education provision and retention rates in the public schools. The inability of the public schools to generate a critical mass of students in Years 11 and 12 was seen as a reason for the limited range of courses, which added to the drift in students to the private schools. Furthermore, the lack of choice in the types of public schools on offer contributed to the educational quality issues in Bunbury. These issues were raised by a senior administrator:

Kids were voting with their feet. There weren't sufficient useful courses for the kids to do at the schools because, even though there were potentially 340 subjects, no schools are ever going to offer that 340. They actually got a restricted range of courses in the senior high schools because of the numbers. Whereas, up there [Perth] with 1200 kids, say 600 in each year group, imagine the range you could have, had the kids been altogether. What we also had in Bunbury in the high schools were three clones. So, from my view, we absolutely needed some variety of institutions for kids. Bunbury was now big enough to offer a choice of educational institutions to meet different kid's needs and that's what it should have ... I knew three clones were

not the answer. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

While many parent representatives were not convinced that a senior campus would offer better social and educational opportunities, the only parent who overtly supported the introduction of a senior campus felt that students were leaving the public education system because of the wide range of courses and services offered by private schools. He explained:

The public education system is not competing against the private system. There are kids leaving the public system in droves to go to the private system because the private system can offer things that a senior campus will be able to offer ... there's been a whole heap of TEE subjects dropped at Bunbury High School. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 16, 2004)

Having identified how the problems with the public schools were constructed in Bunbury, and their resonance with the discourses circulating at the global and national government level, I now move on to explore where the blame for the problems with the local schools was located.

### **Who's to Blame for Our Failing Schools?**

Ball (1998a, p. 125) contends that a “key facet of the policy process and the formulation of the new [neo-liberal] orthodoxies in education is critique.” As Thrupp (1998) says, governments implementing neo-liberal and neo-conservative school reforms tend to locate blame for the poor performance or ineffectiveness at the local and/or school level. This is partly because arguments for increasing the quality of education are based on quantifiable indicators of success rather than qualitative forms of evaluation. Hence, by eliminating socio-political factors from consideration of the performance of schools, the “politics of blame” perspective reinforces a market-driven ideology whereby public schools are viewed as succeeding or failing because they are simplistically constructed as either “good” or “bad” (Thrupp, 1998, p. 206). In this way, the quality of education provision is seen as the result of school policies and practices, which rules out any reference to broader socio-political factors.

Hajer (1993, p. 45) draws on the notion of “discourse coalitions” to explore how policy problems are discursively framed and contested between groups of policy actors. She describes a discourse coalition as “basically a group of actors [or organisations] who

share a social construct” about the world, or an aspect of it, and how the world functions. In relation to *LAEP*, senior EDWA administrators were part of a discourse coalition who attributed the problems with the local schools to teachers and poor educational leaders. Many of the EDWA administrators drew on school effectiveness indicators to build a case to construct the local schools as failures. In relation to Bunbury, one senior District Office EDWA administrator said that, from the longitudinal performance information about the “retention, engagement and performance” of schools, the District Office was “really saying, you’re not doing it well enough in the schools, we’ve got to change this” (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004).

Most of the EDWA Central Office and District Office administrators attributed the poor retention rates and performance of students to the way in which the senior high schools were managed. One senior local EDWA administrator said that addressing the way the senior high schools were managed was a major challenge for the *LAEP* process. He explained:

We wanted the senior high schools changed about issues associated with retention and performance, which were their issues. We wanted them to confront squarely ... management of several of the senior high schools, two of them in particular. The retention information [rates] wasn't good, the performance information was variant and not as good as it could have been. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004)

### ***Local schools are failing to provide for vocational education students***

The senior high schools in Bunbury were seen by the Central and District Office administrators as continuing to support and promote a comprehensive model of schooling rather than to privilege a human capital view of schooling or vocationalise the curriculum. This was despite the Labor Government’s education policy goal for 1996 that required all schools to “organise their upper secondary curriculum around the centrally developed and vocationally relevant pathways of study” (Western Australian Labor Party, 1992, n.p.). The schools were seen by senior EDWA administrators as failing to provide highly skilled flexible workers for industry, and failing to use their resources effectively to develop flexible delivery options for Years 11 and 12 to meet the retention target of 90 percent of young people completing Year 12. Smyth (1999) makes an

important point about this “discourse of derision” (Ball, 1994a, p. 39) in relation to public schools:

With the almost complete collapse in recent years of the youth labour market, it is not difficult to make the case that schools are to blame for not retaining students having a curriculum relevant to the work lives of students rather than governments address the real problem which is a deindustrialization in the context of global restructuring. (p. 440)

When viewed in this broader context, teaching methods and the overall functioning of schools become, as Smyth and Shacklock (1998b, p. 72) suggest, “a convenient scapegoat for a wider economy that has restructured away many employment possibilities previously open to school-leavers.”

The EDWA administrators suggested that *LAEP* needed to challenge the distinction between the academic and vocational streams in schools so that the curriculum was broadened to cater for the needs of all students. One senior District Office EDWA administrator attributed the poor retention rates of students in Years 11 and 12 at the public senior high schools in Bunbury to the failure of the principals to recognise, actively plan and provide courses for the changing and diverse nature of the student population in the high schools (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005). Many of the Central Office and District Office EDWA administrators also said that the management of the high schools in Bunbury serviced the TEE students at the expense of vocational educational and training (hereafter VET) students. They also suggested that this was a major factor contributing to low retention rates in Years 11 and 12 in the senior high schools. In the words of a local senior administrator:

The schools were still very much focused on the TEE subjects. They were timetabled first and sorted out first. The other kids who the Government were trying to push back into schools - schools were not doing it at all well in terms of offering them what was useful for them. Hence, we had all the retention rate issues and this is where Bunbury was significant ... they saw themselves as academic institutions training kids for university. I don't think there was much sense at all that they had accepted that they really needed to do something to help these other kids. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

This view was also held by an EDWA senior administrator from the Central Office who claimed that “Bunbury caters for VET kids the worst of any other town in Australia ... the



teachers virtually only offer academic courses. This is the education issue ... retention rates, therefore, in Bunbury into Year 11 and 12 are terrible” (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004). The inequitable distribution of resources and services to TEE students relative to the lower secondary Year levels by senior managers in the Bunbury schools was also identified by many District and Central Office administrators as part of the reason that there were poor retention rates in Years 11 and 12. In contrast to this perspective, a senior Central Office administrator made the point that this problem was not specific to Bunbury but was a general concern with the way senior high schools were configured and managed across Western Australia. In other words, it was suggested that these problems were symptomatic of a comprehensive model of public schooling.

### ***Inefficient asset management***

Within neo-liberal “economizing” (Ozga, 2000b, p. 24) discourses of education restructuring, one role of local management is to rationalise resources and to provide cost-efficient and effective educational services (Blackmore, 1998; Down, Hogan, & Chadbourne, 1999; McInerney, 2001). The decision by the managements of the senior high schools to allocate staff resources to TEE classes with low student numbers was regarded by the District and Central Office EDWA administrators as an inefficient and inequitable allocation of resources. One Central Office administrator pointed out that this problem was common in Western Australia where schools had not been restructured through the *LAEP* process. He elaborated that school size affects both the efficiency of educational delivery and the educational opportunities available to students and that a critical mass of five hundred Year 11 and 12 students is now considered necessary to enable an adequate range of educational opportunities to be provided. In relation to Bunbury, he said that the number of students in the upper schools was too small to offer “the range of subjects required for a normal curve of interest and ability students” and that this was a problem that *LAEP* needed to address (Senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004). Senior high schools running courses with small class numbers were criticised by District and Central Office administrators as inefficient:

The situation in senior high schools is that the staffing for upper school was based on about one staff member to twenty-five students. But all the schools by and large have tried to maintain their elite students,

maintain the TEE ... where they decide okay we will run these classes and there are six students in it. I've been in Bunbury High when they've had six students in a GNT, that is an \$8,000 staffing decision, 0.2 of an FTE. Over a third of the classes in upper school in Bunbury in that year were less than 15 students. Now that was a very, very expensive way to do things. If you put them all in a senior campus and you've got say 6 GNT kids from [one school] and 8 from [another school] they can all go into the same class. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

A similar point was made by a Central Office administrator about student and teacher ratios who added that “there are instances where you could be forgiven for thinking that we actually run schools for the benefit of teachers as opposed to the maximum benefit of kids ... I believe in Bunbury there's some examples of that” (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004).

### ***Poorly performing teachers***

Many of the Central and District Office administrators identified poor teaching and learning methods as the reasons there were problems with retaining students in the local senior high schools and as symptomatic of difficulties associated with a comprehensive model of schooling. This was explained by a senior EDWA administrator:

They weren't doing enough to attract students back into Years 11 and 12 ... part of it was they were actually providing some inappropriate teaching and learning in Years 9 and 10 ... the way they teach and expect kids to learn still has this Years 8, 9 and 10 focus, but a teacher can't teach a Year 9 class and then suddenly become totally different when they're teaching a Year 11 class, and they'll do this thirty seconds apart. I mean, you know the structure of a high school ... it's that learning environment which isn't necessarily conducive. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

Having identified how the construction of the problems with the local high schools in Bunbury formed part of an agenda-building process by the Central and District office EDWA administrators to justify education restructuring, I now explore how the range of solutions posed legitimated the need for education restructuring and present the reactions by the local community to the solutions posed by EDWA. In doing so, I discuss how the global and national discourses drawn on by EDWA administrators to justify the problems with the local schools are not hegemonic or “totalizing in their effects” (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 289) but are subject to deconstruction, contestation and reconstruction by other participants in the *LAEP* process.

## LOCALISED SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX PROBLEMS: WORKING BACKWARDS

The critical and interpretive accounts of how the case for education reform is framed challenge linear rational policy models that claim that policy problems come before solutions in the policy process. Edelman (2001, p. 22) argues that, in contrast to popular belief, the policy solution generally comes before the construction of the problem both “chronologically and psychologically.” This is partly because problems and solutions are constructed within particular discourses that place limits on the way both problems and solutions are viewed (Bacchi, 2000). Many of the school and parent representatives said that the rationale for reforming education in Bunbury, or the nature of the problems with the local high schools, were constructed retrospectively to suit pre-determined solutions. They also expressed that the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools in Bunbury was part of a policy solution or goal to achieve efficiencies and to reduce the cost of providing public education. In this way, the problem definition processes in *LAEP* illustrate that the policy texts contain “readerly” and “writerly” characteristics (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12) that offer spaces for different readings of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) and opportunities to struggle over the deconstruction, reconstruction and redefinition of the problems with the local high schools. As Ball (1994a, p. 21) suggests, policy processes are not linear but there is often “plenty of social agency and social intentionality” around actors making meaning, contesting, constraining responses and deconstructing hegemonic discourses.

In relation to *LAEP*, social agency is expressed by many participants through deconstructing neo-liberal hegemonic discourses in which the problems with the local schools are located, as well as constructing counter-hegemonic discourses that challenge the way the problems are constructed and the vested interests served. The following narratives demonstrate how many of the *LAEP* representatives came to understand that the EDWA administrators had a pre-determined set of solutions for education restructure in Bunbury. Of particular interest here is how participants expressed their social agency through deconstructing the discourses in which the problems were located by identifying whose interests were seen to be served by promoting certain policy solutions.

## **Pre-determined Policy Solutions: School Closures and a Senior Campus**

The issues of pre-determined policy solutions of school closures and the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight, but many of the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives with whom I spoke said that they had a sense very early in the *LAEP* process that EDWA had an agenda for education reform in Bunbury. In the words of one parent:

I think that's what kept a lot of us in there because we thought, hang on, right from the beginning that there was an agenda, an EDWA agenda ... there were quite a number of people who were quite cynical about it ... teachers and parents and a lot of the principals too. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

Another parent drew a similar conclusion that EDWA had a pre-determined agenda for Bunbury. He explained:

I won't name the guy, we know him well, he's in education here ... we were just talking with him and I just said I'm on this *LAEP* committee ... and of course it led on to 'we'll get what we want eventually' ... so that really arced me up. I thought, right, I can see there is an agenda here ... somebody says we will get what we want anyway who's from the policy side of things, that's an agenda. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

An EDWA administrator responded to the claims by the community representatives that EDWA had a pre-determined agenda for education reform in Bunbury by suggesting that many participants had misunderstood the nature of *LAEP* because of the *School Renewal* process in 1992. He explained:

I mean there was in the mix here, there were two significant sorts of perceptions that existed, not because of *LAEP* but because of some other things that had gone on in the district prior to undertaking this *LAEP* process ... one of the schools that was seriously questioned and challenged was Bunbury Primary School ... one of the conclusions that came out of that was, well maybe, we should shut Bunbury Primary, sell it off and invest in making the other primary schools better able to deal with their increased share of the market and also build a new school at Dalyellup. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004)

A number of the *LAEP* representatives had also been involved in the Education Department of Western Australia's *School Renewal* process in 1992. Based on the *Halden Report* (cited in School Renewal Local Review Group, 1993, p. 3), the terms of

reference for the School Renewal Local Review Group was to develop “a cohesive plan for the future delivery of secondary education in the Greater Bunbury Area” (School Renewal Local Review Group, 1993, p. 5). The Committee’s short term proposal was to retain the three government senior high schools as Years 8-12 schools. The decision was based largely on a submission by the principals that the existing five senior high schools could provide the complete range of educational services rather than the alternative models examined by the Committee. Any changes that needed to be made could be implemented within the existing school structures.

The following long term recommendations of the School Renewal Local Review Group represent a “temporary settlement[s]” (Kenway, 1990, p. 59) between different interest groups with competing agendas for educational reform in Bunbury. While these recommendations were not supported by all Committee members, they did place the issue of consumer choice and vocationalism firmly on the educational agenda in Bunbury:

- That there be three government senior high schools in the Greater Bunbury Area, with a Vocational Education Institute and a senior college catering for post-compulsory students, preferably to be located on or adjacent to the South West College of TAFE/Edith Cowan University site, when the number of students increases to a level able to support such an institution.
- That one senior college/senior high school combination be developed together with two senior high schools in the Greater Bunbury Area. (School Renewal Local Review Group, 1993, p. 47-48)

A senior school administrator who was involved in both processes felt that *LAEP* was an extension of the 1992 *School Renewal* process because EDWA administrators wanted to introduce a senior campus or college in Bunbury as well as to sell BSHS. He explained the similarities between *LAEP* and the *School Renewal* process in the following way:

I was a Principal of one of the local high schools ... there was a lot of meetings trying to get a proposal up between the District Office, which was then Bunbury North and Bunbury South, the two districts and their school Principals. The proposal was, let's put up a model for a senior campus, exactly the same model and that was out of the Education Department or out of the District Office. It generated a lot of heat ... they actually had a deal ... they actually talked about selling Bunbury High School, that was the original proposal. (Senior EDWA school administrator, personal communication, October 28, 2004)

A local politician, who was involved in *School Renewal* and *LAEP*, said that he considered that both of the education review processes were oriented towards introducing a senior campus and that “they [EDWA] set up a process I suppose, at a superficial level, to discuss it but in some ways I also got the feeling that the process was designed to implement the new concept” (Local politician, personal communication, December 20, 2004). An EDWA administrator, who was also involved in *LAEP* and the *School Renewal* process, declared that his preferred outcome from both processes was for the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools. However, he also felt disillusioned with the resistance from staff in the senior high schools to change the way the provision of secondary education was configured in Bunbury. He explained:

I was involved in *School Renewal* and the Principals didn't want the senior high schools to change. They saw it as a threat and as economic rationalism ... as did virtually everybody in the schools. The three Principals at the time coordinated in my view to ensure every negative that could possibly be raised about coordination of resources such as the timetables being coordinated. The teachers and the Principals on the committee wanted the senior high schools left alone. I came away from that really disheartened and thinking that change in Bunbury was going to be extremely difficult. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 30, 2004)

### **Building and Legitimizing the Agenda for Education Reform**

Many of the parents, teachers and non-teacher representatives stated that the EDWA administrators orientated the *LAEP* planning process towards promoting a senior campus and middle schools. One parent highlighted how the need for education restructuring in Bunbury was framed within a crisis discourse:

Secondary education is in crisis and the solution to the crisis is new buildings and technology - we can provide that. Also parallel was the other discourse around middle schools. It was kind of like there were two crises of education. There's a crisis of education for senior students because they're not getting the best opportunities, and there's a crisis of middle schools for 13 to 15 year olds because boys, in particular, are alienated. We need to do something different and that different is middle schools. This is what staggered me about this new document, all of this crisis of youth. You know they're disenfranchised, disengaged, they're alienated, under-performing and unemployed. No factual analysis about unemployment for young people, none at all, nothing that puts it again in context. You know the pathologising of young people, we can rescue them by building a new building. Bizarre. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

In relation to building an agenda for policy change, deLeon (1997, p. 81) contends that policy processes that claim to be participatory or collaborative but are, however, informed by positivism, often discount the views of citizens by presenting empirical scientific knowledge as “truth.” Stone (1988) also suggests that positivist policy analysis, with its emphasis on truth, largely serves the interests of those in power and disguises hidden ideology, interests or power plays. In the case of *LAEP*, the use of statistics to construct the nature of the problems and the necessary solutions was identified as a key strategy that EDWA administrators used to build an agenda for restructuring education in Bunbury. Many of the parent and teacher participants deconstructed the way statistics were used by EDWA administrators to construct the problems with the provision of education in Bunbury and to argue for restructuring the way education was provided in Bunbury. One parent was also clear that the use of statistics was part of a power play by EDWA administrators to maintain control over the *LAEP* problem definition and associated solutions. He explained:

Basically, EDWA was really seeding the thoughts that maybe the current education system was not good enough or had flaws. There had to be something else that was better ... that's what they were getting at. They presented a power-point presentation with graphs and statistics basically trying to demonstrate why the current education system and model of having Years 8–12 was not really working that well. I felt that they were just misusing the statistics and data and drawing long conclusions ... also when people were asking questions, challenging, they were very dismissive just basically saying this is the way it is, you really don't know the facts. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

A similar view was presented by another parent who felt that the nature of the data presented was biased. She explained that “it was apparent that the materials that were presented to us were selected with a view to convincing us of a particular model, being a senior campus model” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004). One senior school administrator, who said that EDWA had a pre-determined agenda to introduce a senior campus, identified what Bachrach and Barataz (1970, p. 43) call a “mobilization of bias” operating in the agenda-building processes for policy change. In other words, power was exercised by and on the part of the EDWA administrators to deliberately keep issues off the agenda. He offered the following analogy to explain how other options were kept from being discussed:

I felt they were trying to steer the conversation, which one of the options do you want ... we had various options but all within one theme. It's like the old car sales trick they start talking about the colour of the car you are going to buy before you've really made up your mind that you are going to buy the car. They were talking about a senior campus here or a senior campus there ... I got to the stage where I was thinking, look they've just got this agenda, they're pushing it and they want it rubber stamped and they are going to lead us on this way. That's what this whole procedure was all about. (EDWA senior school administrator, personal communication, November 30, 2004)

The with-holding of information which offered an alternative perspective to the senior campus model and middle schools was pointed out by a parent who said that “data on situations similar to what the Department’s proposing for the senior campus and middle schools were given to us ... we asked for other research and models but they never came up with it ... deliberate ... very frustrating” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004). Unlike many of the teacher and parent participants, one parent questioned the view that EDWA representatives were promoting a senior campus model. She suggested instead that they were promoting the notion of change rather than a specific approach:

People used to say to me they've got a clear agenda, they know exactly what they want, they want middle schools they want this, that, and the next thing. They never acted like a system that knew what it was doing ... I used to sit there and think you guys haven't actually arrived at a conclusion. They want change but they're not quite sure what the change is. They don't want to be told what to do but they don't know what to do. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

In response to claims by the parent and teacher representatives that EDWA administrators were promoting a senior campus model, a senior administrator said that there was certainly a cultural shift in EDWA to change the structure of senior high schools to a senior campus model:

I worked in the District Office. In that time the District Superintendent and ... were clearly in favour of change. I also was on that middle school reference group in Perth with people at the Assistant Director level ... they were clearly trying to facilitate change certainly from the top. They made it very clear there wasn't a policy on middle schooling. From within the top professional educators there was a move for change but certainly not at the grass roots level. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, December 1, 2004)



While disregarding the claims that EDWA had an agenda to introduce a senior campus in Bunbury, a senior District Office administrator implied that, out of all of the options, a senior campus was an obvious choice. In discussion about the perception that EDWA was pushing a senior campus in Bunbury, he said, “let’s be blunt, you put all these things in and I think one will stand out as being the one” (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004). Claims by parent and teacher representatives that Central Office EDWA personnel had a pre-set agenda to introduce a senior campus in Bunbury were responded to by most of the Central Office participants I spoke with as “lacking a sound basis”, and that they had no preferred model for Bunbury. One representative, however, did say that, in his personal opinion, a senior campus was a “fairly rational conclusion you could come to” because “there was a golden opportunity in Bunbury to develop the piece of land between the TAFE and the University” (EDWA senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004). Unlike the other Central Office representatives, one administrator was clear that the Government preferred to introduce a senior campus in Bunbury rather than retain the existing three senior high schools. He also said that he “definitely wanted a senior campus ... I tried to nudge them [*LAEP* Committee members] in certain directions.” He further added that “both Governments [Coalition and Labor] would have liked changes, would have liked middle schools and senior campuses in Bunbury for a variety of reasons” (EDWA senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, April 2, 2005).

### **Why are Middle Schools and a Senior Campus the Solution?**

I asked the participants who stated that EDWA had an agenda to introduce a senior campus and middle schools in Bunbury what factors were driving EDWA’s preference for changing the structure of provision of education. A number of the parent and teachers stated that, while EDWA did not have an overt or specific policy to introduce senior campuses and middle schools, there was a culture within EDWA to bring about structural change in the way that educational services were delivered across Western Australia. This was occurring within the context of ongoing criticism of the comprehensive model of schooling. The preferred model of senior campuses and middle schools as part of a State wide change agenda was identified by a parent who said “you only have to look around Western Australia to see that there are other examples of *LAEP* processes that, despite community opposition, EDWA rammed through their change agenda” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004).

While many of the EDWA administrators from the District and Central Office also stated that there was not a specific policy to introduce middle school and senior campuses across Western Australia, most of them suggested that it had become increasingly accepted that the comprehensive model of schooling did not adequately cater for contemporary educational requirements in the same way that the senior campus and middle school models could. One local administrator did, however, state that he believed that there was definitely a “push” from the Central Office EDWA personnel to introduce senior campuses and middle schools through the *LAEP* process. He explained:

I think certainly there's a Departmental push for senior colleges. I find it easy to rationalise that and give reasons for it. Middle schooling is a bit the same. Again there are a lot of factors thrown in there that make commonsense to have middle schools. Whether the two are deliberately connected in the first instance, certainly now I think you can say yes. Whenever there's a *LAEP* process, the Centre is going to be trying to push it towards the development of senior campuses and middle schools. But whether or not people sat down right at the start and said we need to get more senior campuses and middle schools in the state, let's develop this policy to try and force that to happen I don't believe that that's happened. But I think certainly it has evolved that way ... it's just too coincidental isn't it that *LAEP* comes in around the time that senior campuses are being introduced. But then *LAEP* has evolved from that school closure policy. (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, February 4, 2005)

### ***Quality education equals choice and cost-cutting***

One of the problems identified earlier with the provision of local educational services was the limited range of subject choice in the senior high schools. This problem was identified as being due to a lack of a critical mass of students in Years 11 and 12 at all of the high schools, which limited the range of subjects offered. Most of the participants from the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives expressed the view that, despite the rhetoric about enhancing curriculum choice, they ultimately concluded that *LAEP* was designed to rationalise educational resources across the State. Hence, the discourse of economic rationalism did not escape the gaze of participants who suggested that the way EDWA constructed the problems with local education, and the preference for senior campuses and middle schools, was driven by an agenda to rationalise resources and provide more cost efficient schooling. One parent expressed that “the type of arguments were cost saving mostly ... I think that the educationalists see that a cost saving measure is to join all their schools together so they would have more facilities in one campus” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004). Senior campuses

and middle schools were seen as offering EDWA an opportunity to provide cheaper public education. This perspective was articulated by a teacher:

We had at our fingertips that senior campuses, the quote was, 'they ain't fancy but they're cheap', because of what was coming out of Tasmania and Victoria. At the moment you can often have what are classified as under-employed staff ... sometimes you'll have a class of 12, 13 or 15. You actually get a very good education for the children under that process but you could have twice as many students in that one class if you were at a senior campus. (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 8, 2004)

Other parent representatives linked the selling of BSHS, which is located on beach-front prime real estate in Bunbury, and the introduction of a senior campus as a quick way for EDWA to generate income. The following statements reflect the sentiment behind many of the comments made about EDWA's motivation for introducing a senior campus:

So the land grab view of both of those schools and the cash money to get EDWA out of a \$1 million dollar deficit was the dominant discourse I think in the community. That's what everyone spoke to me about. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

In response to the claims by other stakeholders that *LAEP* was primarily designed to rationalise resources, to generate income through selling facilities and to promote senior campuses and middle schools as an alternative to the comprehensive high school model, one EDWA District Office administrator told me that one reason for introducing a senior campus was "economic." Furthermore, he asserted that it would "actually save some money in the long term, not in the short term when it was being built because it would be expensive" (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, December 1, 2004). Another senior EDWA administrator, after outlining the educational benefits of a senior campus in terms of greater curriculum choice and increased retention rates, also said that, when compared to the cost of senior high schools, there is more efficient "staff utilisation" because "the major savings in all of this is recurrent savings not one-off capital savings. People focus on the land but the real efficiencies are in salaries and the use of salaries" (EDWA senior Central Office administrator, December 6, 2004).

### ***Senior campuses fit the global shift to an economic rationalist ideology***

Like the "economizing" (Ozga, 2000b, p. 24) discourses deconstructed by other community participants, one parent took a more global perspective, as discussed in

Chapter Four, and said that the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) represents the implementation of a global trend in public sector agencies toward adopting managerialism and economic rationalism as dominant ideologies. He also suggested that the preference for senior campuses and middle schools as part of the associated ideological push for greater economic efficiencies. He explained:

I suspect that most trends that occur in places like Western Australia, or Australia generally, would be influenced very strongly by what happens in Europe or the United States and I think, in particular, the United Kingdom. The whole globalisation and economic rationalist move has been very prominent in the last 10 or 15 years. Ideologically it has been picked up by both sides of politics and it has permeated into the public sector through the senior public servants and, of course, the governments. The CEOs, Directors-General and the Senior Executive of our Government Departments and agencies are very political [emphasised by participant] nowadays. They are there to sing the same tune as their Minister whereas the traditional or Westminster public servant was there to administer the laws of the day rather than to enter into any of the politics associated with a particular Minister or Government of the day. So I think there has been a significant shift to new managerialism, everything is very corporate. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

In relation to the Western Australian Public Service he said:

I think there has definitely been a major shift in the public sector in WA. The shift in ideology is driven through the politicians of the day. That shift has impacted on education. Now you get the senior executive and Directors-General who are put there to reflect a particular view. That direction is occurring globally so, for policy development we see in various micro processes, such as *LAEP*, the impact of that global application. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

He further elaborated on the implications of this “global application” of economic rationalism through *LAEP* at a State and local level:

It was very clear to me that EDWA was running an agenda of rationalising resources. In fact, the planning that was going on in the Education Department was actually driven by their asset management people. When you expose EDWA's underlying direction, the *LAEP* process was nothing more than a placebo. EDWA had an emerging problem of having to develop new high schools which cost, at that time, in the order of \$25 - 30 million dollars each. One way of dealing with that future cost was to sell off assets which enabled them to build a senior campus and utilise existing infrastructure through turning senior high schools into middle schools. In other words, it was done as a method to legitimate what was an economic rationalist approach to the delivery of education. You only had to look at the outcomes that were occurring in the Perth

metropolitan area to see that there is some substance to that observation. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

This parent representative also suggested that, in line with other global trends in education, EDWA's preference for senior campuses and middle schools reflected the policy manoeuvre toward upgrading vocationalisation and developing multi-sectorial partnerships. This New Right discourse about the relevance of schools and the role of education to serve the economy by producing the right kind of future workers was articulated as follows:

There were endorsements from the ECU Dean and from TAFE that a senior campus was the only way to go. It was the only way that the Government was going to be able to deal with its problem of curriculum choice because of the smaller numbers that were doing Years 11 and 12. The only way that they were going to be able to deal with the skills shortages confronting industry was by having a better articulation between secondary education and the TAFE sector. So, we ended up seeing very quickly that the heads of the local University, the TAFE College and EDWA were all saying that there was going to be a senior campus. It was stated in a way, 'well that's the way it's going to be.' Now we can work backwards from that point and legitimate it. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

### ***Senior campuses solve quality issues: Performance and retention***

Many of the parent and teacher representatives identified a number of claims by EDWA personnel from the Central and District Office in relation to what a senior campus and middle schools could deliver relative to the senior high schools. One parent recalled a senior District Office administrator stating that "the senior campus will give the children so many more curriculum options and TEE test scores will increase by 25 percent" (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004). Middle schools were also promoted by EDWA administrators as a way of improving the academic performance of lower secondary students in Bunbury. A teacher representative said that "one of the arguments presented was that our students were falling below State and national standards and, therefore, if we were to have this middle schooling process they would improve" (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 8, 2004). One teacher representative told me that middle schools were promoted as a way of improving the academic performance of students and addressing retention rates in the upper secondary years because classes were structured so that students experienced less

disruption and were, therefore, more engaged and less likely to want to leave school at the end of Year 10. Senior campuses were also attributed with increasing retention rates because they were able to compete with the private education sector. This point was made by a senior Central Office administrator:

Where we've pulled kids back from the independent sector or the non-government school sector, it's always been at senior campuses. That also caters for the full range of kids that want to come back for either Year 11 or to re-enter and do Year 12. If we got the opportunity to do more of those, we should, because they work. (EDWA senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

### ***Senior campuses have worked well elsewhere - Why not Bunbury?***

While most of the senior EDWA administrators I spoke with argued that they did not prefer a particular model for the provision of education in Bunbury, they presented a “policy borrowing” (Dale, 1999a, p. 5) perspective stating that, because senior campuses had addressed similar educational concerns in Australia and other parts of Western Australia, they would obviously solve Bunbury’s issues. As Hajer (1993, p. 45) suggests, “discourse coalitions”, such as EDWA administrators, often draw upon pre-existing notions of action, or what Clegg (1989, p. 238 ) calls “modes of rationality”, to address policy problems. In other words, the way similar problems have been dealt with in the past, or are currently being dealt with, is raised. This is primarily because dominant discourses and discourse coalitions will have been institutionalised within specific institutions or organisations governing their operating procedures, modes of conceptualisation and forms of action. During this process, a problem is generally constructed in a particular way which is congruent with the activities of a dominant discourse coalition, and a story is told about its genesis that entails a solution which complements the existing thought and actions of the discourse coalition. Thus, there is present within the narrational genesis of a particular problem an “immanent solution” (R. Atkinson, 2000, p. 211) that complements the story of how a problem was created and specifies answers to questions such as “who is responsible? what can be done? what should be done?” (Hajer, 1993, p. 45). In relation to *LAEP*, senior campuses were an

“immanent solution” as articulated in the narratives from senior EDWA administrators about their value in other localities:

If that solution in Mandurah has worked as well as it has, why wouldn't it work in Bunbury? In Mandurah it was done from one year to the next and there was not a hiccup. What could be the hiccup in Bunbury? You've got to ask yourself what could be the hiccup? I would suggest the logical thing in Bunbury is two middle schools, one senior campus and one Year 8-12, and the Year 8-12 be at Australind. I would say that's a fairly rational conclusion you could come to. (EDWA senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

The benefits of middle schools and senior campuses were also identified by senior EDWA administrators as a successful way of increasing retention rates in upper secondary. Many of the senior administrators argued that, in other parts of Western Australia where senior campuses had been implemented, retention rates had increased and, therefore, it was natural that this model once implemented in Bunbury would solve the problem of local retention rates. An EDWA Central Office senior administrator explained:

The senior campus has been very successful in improving retention rates to Years 10-11. Like all places in Australia, the retention debate has now shifted from Year 11-12 as opposed to Years 10-11. If you're going to put a senior campus, if that's the policy decision, you have to remember that the experience in Mandurah the year the senior campus opened was that the retention rates doubled from December to January. (EDWA senior Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

A local Member of Parliament also stated that, in his view, the Minister for Education preferred a senior campus model for Bunbury because it had worked well in other localities across the State. He explained:

The Minister likes the super school model ... he has done it elsewhere and it proved popular and it worked. When he started this from Bunbury, he asked 'why is there this resistance, the idea has worked so well'? Having said that, I think that there is also recognition that it hasn't worked for places like Geraldton. (Local politician, personal communication, November 25, 2004)

The problem definition process and promotion of solutions in *LAEP* suggests a view of the state as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360) where the interior of the State is “multi-sited and differentiated in its interests and influence” (Gale, 1997, p. iv).

As Jessop (1990, p. 360) suggests, discursive contests do not occur on a level playing field. Rather, the state policy elites were “strategically selective” (Jessop, 1990, pp. 9-10) by promoting specific discourses about education restructuring which were a “crystallisation of past strategies as well as privileging ... [certain] ... current strategies.” In short, the State policy elites exercised power to promote neo-liberal problem definitions that were more amenable to certain types of policy interventions than other policy solutions.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter has illustrated how the justification for reforming the Western Australian public education system, as outlined in the *LAEP* policy texts, is located within globalisation discourses, and the problems with public education reflect neo-liberal economising discourses circulating at the macro level of the policy trajectory. The manner in which the problems with the Western Australian public education system were constructed by Central and District office EDWA administrators at the macro and middle-range level of the policy trajectory also reflects a coalition of conservative themes that is consistent with neo-liberal education discourses. Hence, the emphasis by EDWA administrators on the poor retention rates, the lack of vocational curriculum, and the poor performance standards in relation to training young people for the labour market was underpinned by a human capital view of education. Quality education was defined within an economising discourse that promotes cost effectiveness and is claimed to provide students with the right vocational skills and knowledge which are directly transferable to the workplace environment. The perceived problems with the image of public schools emphasise the importance of neo-liberal competition and marketisation strategies for revitalising public education. The claimed lack of consumer choice in relation to educational facilities and vocational courses in Bunbury also reflects the construction of the problems with the local schools within a neo-liberal framework that accepts the importance of competition in the local educational market-place. Reflective of the way neo-liberal ideology renders the inequalities of educational outcomes in relation to issues of class, race and disability, the blame for the problems with the local schools at the micro level of the policy trajectory is individualised and, therefore, devoid of any structural analysis.



The neo-liberal discourses drawn on by the EDWA policy elites to challenge the purpose, quality, efficiency and competitiveness of the Bunbury schools were, however, not hegemonic at the micro level of the policy trajectory and were deconstructed and contested by many of the parent and teacher *LAEP* representatives. In particular the “discourse of derision” (Ball, 1994a, p. 39) about the management, quality and performance of the senior high schools in Bunbury was challenged. Many parent representatives contested the economising discourses in which the problems with the local schools were constructed. In particular, the perceived pre-determined policy solutions, of a senior campus and middle schools, were viewed as part of an economic rationalist manoeuvre to rationalise the provision of educational services and to promote a human capital view of education through upgrading vocational education. The discursive contests between interests groups surrounding the problem definition and the identification of solutions in *LAEP* suggest that the State as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360) is differentiated in its interests and influences and that the State policy elites were “strategically selective” (Jessop, 1990, pp. 9-10) in promoting specific discourses about education restructuring as a means to engineer support for neo-liberal education restructuring policies.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONTESTING LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING

#### INTRODUCTION

In a similar way to previous education restructuring initiatives in Western Australia as outlined in Chapter Five, the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) document is a top-down policy that was initiated and authored by the EDWA's Central Office bureaucracy. While this particular reform package reflects a set of education restructuring discourses that are recognisable at a global and national level, it is important not to assume, as noted in Chapter Seven, that these discourses are "totalizing in their effects" at the local level of practice (Marginson & Rhoades, 2002, p. 289). Drawing on Lingard's development of Appadurai's idea (cited in Lingard, 2000b, p. 80) of "vernacular globalization", or "glocalization" (p. 81), the aim of this chapter is to illuminate the importance of how the local context responds to and mediates globalising pressures and "travelling" ideas about education reform (Dehli, 2004, p. 46). The focus of this chapter is therefore, on the way *LAEP*, as a policy in practice, was interpreted and [re]constructed at the local level in Bunbury by different actors and interest groups who promoted competing discourses and agendas for education reform. The analytic emphasis is on the micro-political processes associated with the agenda-building activities of local actors who exercised their agency within an "invited" policy space, (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) to redefine *LAEP* as a problem on the public, media and political agendas which lead to a series of "temporary settlements" (Kenway, 1990, p. 59) by the State in relation to education restructuring in Bunbury.

To explore how *LAEP* was contested at the local level this chapter comprises four main sections. The first section discusses how the different models of agenda-building processes offer a useful approach through which to explore the micro-politics of resistance associated with the enactment of *LAEP*. The idea that there are a number of key focusing events that the participants identified as significant in contests around the creation and definition of issues or problems throughout the policy process is introduced. The second section addresses how particular focusing events, and the associated issues that emerged in relation to the enactment of *LAEP*, acted as a trigger for the mobilisation

of community opposition to the *LAEP* process. The discourses drawn on by different interest groups to define and contest the problems with *LAEP* in the public arena are presented. The third section explores the intensification of the resistance to *LAEP* and the tactics and political manoeuvres adopted by local community members to define *LAEP* as a problem on the public, media and political agendas. The fourth section discusses how the *LAEP* outcomes represent a temporary policy settlement on the part of the State, and how the State policy elites were “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135) to ensure that aspects of the centrally driven education restructuring agenda remained on the government policy agenda.

To address the dynamic interactions and tensions between the enactment of a centrally formulated policy initiative constrained by broader global education restructuring discourses and the micro level agency of actors in a local educational site, I draw on the following theoretical and organisational ideas from the CPTF. At the macro structural level the ideas include the extent to which:

- the playing out of global and national discourses in specific contexts is mediated by local histories, cultures and politics;
- state institutions manage the policy process and outcomes by negotiating “centre-periphery relations” (Ball, 1990, p. 20) or “steering at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135);
- the state as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360) and state actors are involved in the micro-politics of discursive contestation, conflict and incoherence across state sites;
- policy is determined by dominant discourses or “temporary settlements” (Kenway, 1990, p. 59) evident in contexts in which the state exercises significant influence; and
- the state’s need to manage accumulation/legitimation and “technical managerial problems” (Ball, 1994a, p. 5) and tensions shapes the nature of policy settlements reached between competing interests.

At the middle-range level the ideas include:

- how policy issues are redefined throughout agenda-building processes to maximise their legitimacy and visibility on the public, media and political agendas;

- the significance attributed to “focusing events” (Birkland, 1998, p. 54) throughout the agenda-building process as a tactic for issue and conflict expansion and the redefinition or reconstruction of policy discourses; and
- how social agency is exercised throughout agenda-building processes to create, reshape or lever open and claim other participatory policy spaces.

At the micro level of practice the organising ideas include:

- how the “readerly” and “writerly” (Barthes cited in Bowe et al., 1992, pp. 10-12) nature of policies offers opportunities for individuals and groups to exercise effective agency and resistance throughout the policy process;
- the extent to which policy reconstruction and settlements throughout the policy process are related to:
  - ❖ the nature and level of individual and collective political action and tactics;
  - ❖ the ways in which policy participants take up the act of “authorship” (B. Davies, 1991, p. 50) as a way of exercising agency and resisting dominant or subordinate power relations and hegemonic discourses; and
  - ❖ how the creation of new subject positions through counter hegemonic discourses enables new ways of participating in policy decision-making and reconstruction.

As a way forward I commence with a discussion of the relationship between agenda-building, policy change and enactment and the micro-politics of resistance.

## **AGENDA-BUILDING AND THE MICRO-POLITICS OF RESISTANCE**

The agenda-building approach by Cobb et al. (1976) provides a heuristic framework to explore the messy micro-politics associated with the enactment of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a). While Cobb et al. (1976) draw on a number of models to conceptualise policy agenda-building and change processes, the formulation of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) reflects their “mobilization model” (Cobb et al., 1976, p. 27). As outlined in Chapter Two, the mobilization model identifies how policy issues initiated inside government or the bureaucracy automatically achieve policy agenda status and, potentially, the decision agenda of government. Once an issue has been elevated to the government policy agenda and a policy position formulated, political leaders and or bureaucrats attempt to mobilise the necessary interest, support, and compliance of the

public for the enactment of the policy. While the formulation of *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) resembled a “mobilization model”, the enactment of *LAEP*, which was a highly contested process, reflected the characteristics of an “outside initiative model” (Cobb et al., 1976, p. 27). The outside initiative model identifies how issues arising from non-government groups are expanded and constructed to attract the attention of broader sections of the community so that these issues access the public agenda and, potentially, the media agenda in a way that requires some form of policy response or resolution. In an attempt to place issues on the public agenda, social actors call attention to them and define them as subject to political action. Pressure is then placed on the policy decision-makers to place the issue on the political agenda and, finally, the decision-making agenda of government (Cobb et al., 1976, p. 128).

The value of agenda-building for *LAEP* is that it focuses attention on how policy is read, as well as the importance of resistance and effective social agency in the development of discourses and counter discourses as part of the politicisation and redefinition of policy issues so that some form of policy settlement is reached. The notion of agenda-building also resonates with “claimed/created” participatory spaces (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27) which, as Cornwall (2002b, p. 17) says, “emerge more organically out of sets of common concerns or identifications; they may come into being as a result of popular mobilisation, such as around identity or issue-based concerns.” Gaventa’s (2006, p. 27) “claimed/created” spaces can also be understood as a “Thirdspace” (Soja, 1996, p. 68 ), where social actors exercise effective resistance and social agency through rejecting hegemonic participatory spaces thus creating alternative spaces for more effective participation (Gaventa, 2006, p. 27).

### **Agenda-Building: Focusing Events and Issue Creation**

Cobb and Elder (1983) elaborate on the agenda-building approach by Cobb et al. (1976) and suggest that whether a policy issue accesses the public, media and political agendas depends on the dynamics associated with issue creation and issue expansion. In the issue creation phase, “triggering” (Wasieleski, 2001, p. 116) or “focusing events” (Birkland, 1998, p. 54) may be drawn on by stakeholders to define and to create an issue. As Birkland (1998, pp. 54-55) says, “focusing events” are often unexpected developments which are incongruous with the expectations and values of stakeholders. Because *LAEP* was replete with contradictory interpretations of how the *Framework* should be enacted,

and the meaning and significance of events, I asked all participants to identify what they considered were the main focusing events throughout the process. The significance of drawing on the notion of focusing events for this study is that, like critical incidents, they generally mark a “turning-point or change” (Tripp, 1993, p. 24) for an individual, a process or an institution. Tripp explains that they represent the individual stakeholder’s “interpretation of the significance of an event” (p. 8) rather than being characterised as critical due to an objective criteria. In the context of the *LAEP* process, the focusing events, and the associated political mobilisation or agenda-building processes of interest groups, interrupted the enactment of the *LAEP*. The stakeholders were able to define the issues in such a way that they were able to access the public, media and political agendas, and to shape significantly the initial outcomes of the Bunbury *LAEP* process.

In total, participants identified ten focusing events that occurred throughout the two year period of the *LAEP* process in Bunbury (see Appendix 10). While not all of the ten focusing events were identified by all participants, each event was identified by at least one participant and many were identified by most participants. Most of the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives identified some of the initial focusing events as instrumental in moving the issue of education reform in Bunbury onto the public and political (government) agendas as a highly contested issue that required action and resolution. My approach here is to describe aspects of the focusing events and to explore the layers of meaning associated with an event by looking for “deeper structures”, processes and underlying trends that contributed to the production of the incident (Tripp, 1993, p. 9). This requires the identification of the various interests, political tactics and circulating discourses through which the politics or the process of policy issue representation were conducted. Agenda-building processes ultimately expose whose discursive frame is afforded presence at any particular time and with what power effects. Drawing on Foucault, Cornwall (2002b, p. 8) states that “discourses have material as well as symbolic dimensions; they shape not only what is said and done, but what is sayable and do-able in any given social space, constituting what counts as knowledge and whose knowledge counts.”

As a way forward I now discuss how two focusing events triggered the formation of a group of activists who campaigned against school closures.

## **Developing a *LAEP* Draft Options Plan: Exposing school closures**

In June 1998 and August 1998, the Secondary Drafting Committee convened to develop the *LAEP Draft Options Plan*. Parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives identified two focusing events that brought *LAEP* decision-making processes into sharp focus in relation to school closures and tensions between community participation discourses in practice. The first focusing event was in August 1998, after the Secondary Drafting Committee had developed the *LAEP Draft Options Plan* for the delivery of secondary education in the Bunbury District. The Secondary Drafting Committee, which comprised 42 members, recommended nine *LAEP* Options. The two categories of Options were:

- retain the existing Years 8-12 senior high school structure with enhancements; or
- build a senior campus with variations. (*LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee Minutes, July 6, 1998)

Following the development of the Secondary Drafting Committee's *LAEP Draft Options Plan*, the District Director (Schools) presented his recommended Options or models to the Committee members at a subsequent meeting (*LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee Minutes, July 28, 1998). His plan collapsed the Secondary Drafting Committee's nine Options to four. All of his four Options recommended the closure of BSHS and the introduction of a senior campus co-located with TAFE and ECU. One of his models recommended the closure of BPS which is a feeder school for BSHS (*LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee Minutes, July 28, 1998). One parent representative described his issues about the *LAEP* Options drafted by the District Director (Schools) as follows:

We had 40-50 people there. I proposed to the group to set a vision with plans and goals so that we could agree on an overall vision and overall objectives. [An EDWA official] said that's a good idea and then ignored it. Then, at the next meeting, one of the teachers proposed the same thing and again the [official] ignored it completely. Soon after that we were presented with a report which said, at the top, this is the report of our group and it recommended that we have a senior campus model. I think it was addressed to the Minister for Education, anyway the chiefs of the Education Department in Perth. I put up my hand and said ... this is not our report, but it says it's our report here. I said 'this is the report that you prepared ...these are your views and you're representing them as our views. It's not good enough.' (Parent representative, personal communication, November 11, 2004)

Another parent representative explained the significance of this event for many of the teacher and parent representatives:

The critical incident was that [an EDWA administrator] said 'we're going to shut Bunbury High School and Bunbury Primary School.' That was the critical point - after we had come up with these [LAEP] Options. That was when he said it. Our Options were never really taken seriously. When EDWA came down with that as an option, people thought that's their agenda, they want to shut Bunbury High School ... that's when all hell broke loose. (Parent representative, personal communication, November, 16, 2004)

Late July 1998, the District Director (Schools), without the support of many of the community, teacher and non-teacher Secondary Drafting Committee members, referred his four Options to the Director-General, EDWA, for his approval to commence consultation with the Bunbury community. In addition, the EDWA District Office prepared a press release which supported the District Director's (Schools) four Options over the nine Options developed by the Drafting Committee. This action was not endorsed by the Secondary Drafting Committee members. The press release stated:

Altogether nine Options have been suggested and have been thoroughly tested against a set of planning principles developed to determine which options will best meet the needs of secondary students into the next century. The District Director has developed four models that he is recommending as they provide a significantly better educational provision for secondary students in the District. These four models will form the basis of the consultation with the local community. (Bunbury District Education Office, July 30, 1998)

The second focusing event occurred in August 1998, when the Primary and Secondary Principals, P & C Presidents, local Secondary Drafting Committee members, interested parents and EDWA representatives attended a special meeting in the Tower in Bunbury with senior administrators from the Central and District EDWA Offices. The purpose of the meeting was for the District Director (Schools) to outline his recommendations or *LAEP* Options and to convene a Secondary Consultative Committee to consult on these Options with the Bunbury community. At this meeting, a senior administrator informed participants that "the Senior College and co-location Options had been an issue for over five years" (Community representative's Minutes, August 12, 1998). Many of the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives identified the meeting in the Tower as a focusing event because it further confirmed that EDWA Central and District Office personnel planned to close schools and to introduce a senior campus and middle schools in



Bunbury. Many of the parent representatives spoke about the manner in which the issue of school closures was reinforced by EDWA officials at the meeting in the Tower. One parent told me that, for him, the meeting in the Tower was one of “his awakenings and a disturbing one ... there was an agenda to change the primary and high schools (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004). Another said that the meeting at the Tower confirmed that EDWA had a pre-set agenda for the nature of education restructuring in Bunbury. She explained:

The document they came up with basically said we will close Bunbury High no matter what ... I remember EDWA giving out all these papers ... the whole thing was going to be wound up by November [1988]. It was like, here's the document with Options a, b, and c, clearly all about closing Bunbury High. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

### **Who Has the Right to Speak, Be Heard and Make Decisions?**

While the focusing events highlight that school closures were emerging as a highly contested issue, at the local level they also demonstrate the “writerly” (Bowe et al., 1992, p. 11) nature of policy in relation to competing views about who has the authority to determine *LAEP* Options at the local level. As Ball (1997, p. 262) says, there is always “room for manoeuvre involved in the translation of policies into practices.” For many of the senior EDWA administrators, their assumptions in relation to the role of parents and teachers in the decision-making process in developing *LAEP* Options were based on an inequitable power relationship between EDWA and the local community representatives. As one senior EDWA administrator expressed:

The State's policy on *LAEP* was actually quite clear. The District Director was to convene the process, chair the meetings and write the report - it was as clear as that ... the Minister will make the decision based on the District Director's report ... they [the community] didn't have any power other than to talk and to raise issues and to give points of view ... no, they had no decision-making power in the policy. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

In contrast to the EDWA administrators, many of the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives interpreted the policy text to mean that they had a decision-making role in developing the *LAEP* Options for consultation with the Bunbury community. One parent explained:

Well they [EDWA] didn't stick to the framework ... you'll see notes where we asked questions about what was happening, or whether what was happening actually was in accordance with this *Framework*. For example, see page 23 of the *Framework* which says 'When the Drafting Committee is satisfied it has met its Terms of Reference'. (Parent representative, personal communication, March 5, 2005)

Following the presentation of the District Director's (Schools) *LAEP Options*, one of the teacher representatives circulated a letter to all of the Secondary Drafting Committee members claiming that the *LAEP* policy text states that the authority to develop the *LAEP Draft Options Plan* rests with the Secondary Drafting Committee rather than being the sole right of the District Director (Schools). He stated:

It is my concern that the recommendations and results from the Drafting Committee have not been reflected within the 'models' detailed in the draft report presented on 21 July, 1998. As stated in the Local Area Education Planning Framework (Sept 97, Pg 21) document it is the responsibility of the Drafting Committee to 'develop all options, then make a recommendation' ... this process has been done outside the forum of this Committee, when in fact it should have been an integral part of the Committee's work ... there also seems to be an emphasis on the senior campus models, when in fact the decision to seriously look at that model or component has not yet been made by the Drafting Committee. (Letter to Secondary Drafting Committee from teacher representative, July 28, 1998).

These competing views of the role and power of participants in the *LAEP* process reflect different discourses about community participation in "invited" (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) policy spaces as discussed in Chapter Six. Within these participatory discourses, being constructed as clients, users, or citizens influences the perception of what participants are able to contribute or are entitled to know or decide. Throughout the enactment of *LAEP*, discourses surrounded the legitimacy of participation and the unequal power relations between participants and those who define what constitutes legitimate participation were contested. These issues, as Barnes et al. (2003) point out, characterise participatory planning processes. For example, the senior EDWA administrators assumed a position of dominance in the *LAEP* decision-making process characteristic of an "ideology of expertism" (I. Young, 1990, p. 80), which is consistent with the corporate managerialist approach discussed in Chapter Six. As Callaghan and Wistlow (2006, p. 592) suggest, where "expert knowledge" is the "currency of cultural capital" this hierarchical approach devalues the social and cultural capital held by different categories of participants to the extent that the public's capital must always be less "valuable" than that of the

professionals. They further add that, when legitimacy to participate in policy processes is based in the cultural capital held in professional knowledge, the justification of a restricted form of listening to the public view is implied (p. 591).

A senior administrator not only reflected the “ideology of expertism” (I. Young, 1990, p. 80) but also legitimated not listening to the community representatives’ views when he drew a distinction between participants as “amateurs” and EDWA as “experts.” He argued that “people off the street do not have the experience” and explained that this creates a “flawed” process (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, April 2, 2005). This perspective was shared by another senior administrator involved in the enactment of *LAEP* at the local level who said:

Understand this. I am a professional educator. I actually know a fair bit about how kids need to learn and how schools work. I actually am an operator who runs a business and that's where I have some expertise that the average Joe doesn't have. I don't want to challenge the accountant, the accountant has some expertise that I don't, so does the doctor, the chemist, the lawyer. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004)

A number of parent participants were able to name how the “ideology of expertism” (I. Young, 1990, p. 80) in practice not only reflected a corporate managerialist view of community participation but also how this ideology legitimated the EDWA senior administrators’ views and devalued and constrained parental agency in *LAEP*. As one parent noted:

I think one of the discourses I didn't mention was that EDWA were the experts about education. That, I think was the most offensive discourse in that whole process for me because they would all claim I am a teacher, I am an educationalist and you're not ... I found most intriguing to learn from the whole process how married they were to the discourse of you don't know, we know, and we'll advise you. You should follow our advice. When you challenge it and say, well, actually I know probably as much as you do about education, they [EDWA] get very, very angry. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

This parent was also prescriptive about the subject positions available to participants through the participatory discourses and the effects in terms of limiting the spaces for

voice in developing the *LAEP Draft Options Plan* at the Secondary Drafting Committee meetings. She explained these ideas in the following way:

A compliant alternative voice was a key position you could occupy. You weren't meant to be a total stooge because that didn't look good either. You could raise questions but to a threshold of compliance and if you went beyond that threshold then you became a bad guy. I think what surprised them was how many went beyond that threshold. We're [EDWA] happy to hear your opinions and we know you have different opinions but ... you figured out where that 'but' was very, very quickly because it wasn't very far away. If you didn't immediately come back into the compliant position ... there was only one track for you and that was exclusion and indifference. So that compliant assertiveness of positioning was critical to work out and then you have a clear choice about where you were going after that. I think the other voice they were prepared to hear was an acceptable community representation voice. If they felt you represented the community that they didn't want to hear, then you lost that voice capacity. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

These initial focusing events also illustrate the way participatory processes within a corporate managerialist discourse are often heavily controlled and managed in practice. In particular, they demonstrate how sections of the State attempted to silence the counter voices of their employees by using coercive and authoritarian strategies to close down participatory spaces. This was clearly evident when an EDWA teacher, who was also a parent representative, wrote to the media criticising the District Director's (Schools) four *LAEP* Options as well as the process used to develop the Options. In a letter to the Director-General EDWA regarding EDWA employees making media statements, a local senior EDWA administrator stated that he had "spoken with the teacher involved and strongly recommended that he may not be able to distance himself from his employee status." He added "he would be advised not to make any further statement to the media ... I have no doubt that [the teacher] ... understood the strength of my advice" (Letter to the Director-General from Senior EDWA District Office administrator, August 12, 1998). Despite a number of teachers being parent representatives for their schools, they received a letter from EDWA advising them that they were not permitted to publicly criticise the *LAEP* planning process or outcomes. One participant explained the effect of this letter was that "you just felt immediately that you were seen as a vociferous minority that was just simply stirring up trouble for no good reason ... that is exactly how we were made to feel" (Senior EDWA school administrator, personal communication, October 28, 2004).

## **MOBILISING COMMUNITY RESISTANCE TO SCHOOL CLOSURES: ISSUE EXPANSION**

While the initial focusing events attracted the attention of many of the elected community and teacher representatives, as Wasieleski, (2001, p. 119) suggests, it is the formation of “identification groups” who invest in reshaping the political management of a problem that leads to issues being expanded in the public arena. In the case of *LAEP*, one parent explained how some like-minded parent participants, who held cultural values conducive to collective action, formed a group to resist school closures:

It was a fluke. There was a group of us who had kids the same age so we had a certain investment in this as parents and we also had some real expertise ... there was a group of core activists who were really working out of a strong critical perspective who saw it as a blatant attack on democracy if you like, as well as being a bad outcome for our kids. We all knew each other from beforehand so in lots of ways it was a personal network. We were used to having shared meals and it was a topic that could come up. Now that doesn't happen very often in communities; people often have to form new relationships. So that, in itself, was an interesting coalition, a coalescing of ideas. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

For another parent representative, the activists' group, which drove the opposition to *LAEP* in the public arena, represented a cross section of participants. He stated:

Some of the strongest and most active people in this were of a fairly similar mind ... the network of activists represented quite a broad spectrum from some Principals of schools, teachers, some senior ones some more junior, parents. I didn't think there would be as many people from this side of EDWA who would be against the way this process was going. (Parent representative, personal communication, March 5, 2005)

### **Defining School Closures as a Problem in the Public and Political Arenas**

As an initial political manoeuvre to place the issue of closures on the public agenda, the core activist group organised public meetings at the BPS and BSHS, which were the schools targeted for closure. These meetings were in response to the District Director's (Schools) *LAEP* Options and the meeting in the Tower at which senior EDWA officials confirmed that school closures were “not being ruled out” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004). In addition to these factors, the public meeting regarding the closure of BPS was in response to the receipt by a parent representative of a set of Minutes from a former Principal who had been a member of the

EDWA Bunbury Schools Planning Group throughout 1996 (see Appendix 14). The parent explained that “the meeting of school Principals in 1996, which was chaired by the same District Director, categorically stated that Bunbury Primary School was to close ... by the year 2000”. He further added, that even though the primary school process wasn’t actually the focus of *LAEP*, “our argument was that the Bunbury High School and Bunbury Primary School were clearly both being targeted ... the closure of one, we would argue, impacted on the other.” This parent also stated that he “informed the community, via a letter, of what the intention of the Education Department was.” He added “I called a meeting on a couple of days’ notice where the District Director was invited to explain his agenda” (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005).

The letter referred to above invited parents to a special P & C meeting and identified the following issues to be addressed by the District Director (Schools):

- That the District Director’s (Schools) four LAEP Options, which had been forwarded to the Director-General for Education and were not endorsed by the Drafting Committee, all recommended closing Bunbury Senior High School and Bunbury Primary School;
- That the Bunbury Primary School representative on the Drafting Committee stated that she had been present when closing BPS was included as an LAEP Option at the insistence of the District Director of the Education Department;
- When the issue of naming Bunbury Primary School for closure was raised at the meeting at the Tower on the 12 August 1998, the District Director stated that it was an Option put forward and he did not think it appropriate to exclude it. Importantly, the Executive Director of the Education Department stated in his concluding comments that Bunbury Primary School was a ‘big issue not a small issue’; and
- That the Bunbury Schools Planning Group recommended in 1996 to close Bunbury Primary School by the year 2000. (Letter to School Community, August 13, 1998)

The public meeting at BPS was attended by more than 80 people. EDWA personnel were questioned about whether they had an agenda to close BPS. A community representative told me that this meeting was a key focusing event because it confirmed that concerns about the future of the school were justified. In his words:

When they were asked did they have any agenda around the closure of the school, they stated that they didn’t. We had the Minutes of the

meeting where the same EDWA people were present and signed off on the closure of the [primary] school. The fact that they publicly lied in relation to the closure of the Bunbury Primary School was a critical incident. In many respects, it really did turn the tide. It did send some alarm bells out that there was this kind of secret behind closed doors agenda running and they were prepared to state publicly that they didn't know anything about it and we had proof to the contrary. I think that is an enormously damning situation for EDWA ... to be brutally honest, their performance was appalling ... so this gives you some indication of what we were dealing with. Part of the problem, I suppose, is that these Education Department people just felt that they could do what they liked. They make the decision and work backwards from it and go through some ridiculous tokenistic process of community engagement. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

The transcript from this public meeting indicates that, rather than address the issues identified for discussion at the public meeting, the EDWA officials primarily focused on promoting the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury on the basis that it would provide greater subject choice, that larger classes give better TEE results, and that a senior campus could release up to fifteen teachers for the senior high schools (Special P & C Meeting Minutes, August 17, 1998). A week after the public meeting at BPS, August 17, 1998, the Secondary *LAEP* Drafting Committee representatives called a Special P & C Meeting at BSHS to publicly oppose the closure of the school. This meeting was initiated, not only because of the issues emerging at the local level in relation to *LAEP*, but also in response to a comment by the Minister for Education in a Perth based newspaper which stated:

[The Minister for Education] would not guarantee there would be no closures in the next two years. His comments came in the wake of Auditor-General Des Pearson's report, tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, which suggested there was further scope for rationalisation of schools. [The Auditor General] found the cost of running smaller campuses was up to five times higher than their bigger counterparts. Outside the House the Minister said, 'Bunbury was not facing the acute problems which had precipitated changes in Perth's western suburbs and the south-west corridor but we will plan the way it might develop in the future and one option might well be a senior college.' (Grove, 1998, August 21, p. 10)

At the public forum at BSHS, the invited speakers were the Principal of BSHS, the EDWA District Director (Schools), the local Member of Parliament and one of the BSHS *LAEP* representatives. The meeting, which attracted approximately 200 people from both primary and secondary schools, was identified as a focusing event by many participants

because it was an indicator that the issue of school closures had moved beyond a small interest group to become a highly salient issue on the public agenda.

### **Deconstructing and Challenging Official Education Restructuring Discourses: Public Meetings**

While agenda-building involves a series of actions and strategies by which certain issues become the centre of public attention as Portz (1996) says, being able to determine how issues and solutions are defined plays a critical role in shaping public opinion and political debate and ensures that issues remain on public and policy agendas. In this way, the ability to politicise issues by privileging certain discourses and problem definitions is an important component of the exercise of power (Lukes, 1974) and central to ensuring that issues are seen as requiring a policy response on the public, media and political agendas (Beckett, 1994). While acknowledging the important role of discourses and their symbolic appeal for promoting certain problem definitions, Wasieleski (2001) also argues that groups or individuals engaged in claims-making or social activism must possess some legitimacy to expand their issues in the public arena. In other words, the particular construction of a problem and its symbolic appeal will generally be enhanced if groups or individuals are perceived as possessing substantial levels of social and cultural capital at the local level (for a more detailed discussion of social and cultural capital see Chapter Six). It is these interacting factors that we see come into play at the public meeting at BSHS as speakers engaged in a dynamic process of argumentation in relation to *LAEP*.

At the public meeting at BSHS, the EDWA speaker justified the proposed change in the structure of the provision of education in Bunbury, and the introduction of a senior campus, within neo-liberal economic rationalist and managerialist discourses. This view of education provision focuses on a rationalisation of services and aims to serve an educational market. In this way, educational services are geared toward individual consumer choice rather than the collective interest of a local community. One tactic EDWA officials drew on to persuade the meeting that educational change was required was to emphasise the problems with the performance of BSHS and the limitations of the comprehensive model of schooling for contemporary educational needs. The main thrust of his argument which was set within a managerial discourse emphasised improving quality and educational choice. He argued that there was an attendance and alienation issue in secondary schools, the TEE aggregate is less for small cohorts, Bunbury needs a



choice of educational institutions, and Bunbury SHS does not meet modern educational needs (Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998).

At the local level in Bunbury, state power was not secured through “the creation of a unified coherent discourse” (Gramsci cited in Tauxe, 1995, p. 472) which justified educational change. In other words, the neo-liberal discourse of educational change was not hegemonic, and the legitimization of State power to restructure the provision of educational services in Bunbury was roundly contested by the other speakers and members of the audience. In contrast to the market discourse of education, the argument for the retention of the BSHS and opposition to the introduction of a senior campus were underpinned by a communitarian discourse particularly in relation to the purpose of public education and the role of community participation in educational decision-making. One of the key concepts of a communitarian discourse, according to Olssen et al. (2004, p. 15), is that it is “allied to concepts of social inclusion and trust.” Gaventa (2002) differentiates between the liberal, communitarian and civic republican traditions when he says:

Central to liberal thought is the notion that individual citizens act ‘rationally’ to advance their own interests, and the role of the state is to protect citizens in the exercise of their rights .... the concept of the ‘self-interested’, ‘independent’ citizen, which some liberal thinkers construct, has been critiqued by communitarians, who argue that an individual’s sense of identity is produced only *through* relations with others in the community of which she or he is a part. As this implies, ... communitarian thought centres on the notion of the socially-embedded citizen and on community belonging ... in contrast to much liberal thought. Civic republican thinking, on the other hand, places more emphasis on people’s political identities as active citizens, apart from their identities in localised communities. While it also emphasises what binds citizens together in a common identity, this is underpinned by a concern with individual obligations to participate in communal affairs ... as this suggests, much civic republican writing promotes deliberative forms of democracy. (p. 5)

Many of the ideas expressed by parents reflect a communitarian or a civic republican approach more than a liberal view and are aligned to the notion of collective rather than individual interests. One parent stated:

What I would call an activist’s discourse was, I think, a communitarian discourse ... that education is about relationships and it’s about community and faith and values. A communitarian discourse is quite conservative. We want our kids in school from Years 8 till 12. We want schools to be communities. Yes, there are problems in schools but

they can be fixed under the current structure and we need to be an integral part of planning for this. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

The Chairperson of the BSHS School Management Committee identified the closure of BSHS as a major problem and located his arguments within a communitarian discourse. He emphasised the importance of values in planning for the provision of education and, in particular, the role of schools in developing a sense of community and belonging for young people. He justified the retention of the comprehensive model of schooling at the public meeting on the grounds that:

We, the Management Committee, consider that the current recommendations of the District Director [sic] are of doubtful worth in so far as ... the doubling of middle schools in size and the placing of them [students] on a separate campus from Years 11 and 12, and creating a Senior Campus ... at the ECU site ... of somewhere between 1100 to 1200 students ... we believe in Years 11 and 12 role modelling very firmly indeed. We favour increasing, and not reducing, the interaction between generations. We believe that the quality of relationships in our institutions of education are critical to the development of our students and we therefore favour small rather than large institutions ... staff and student values is what is important in education ... and the relationships between teachers and students ... not the site at which they go. (Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998)

In a similar vein to the Chairperson of the BSHS School Management Committee, the Principal, BSHS, deconstructed the problems with the performance of BSHS outlined by the EDWA District Director (Schools) and contested the notion that the Director's representation of what constituted the provision of quality education was the only *truth*. As Leach and Scoones (2007, p. 8) say, the "politics of knowledge" and the "deployment of information in struggles over meaning and interpretation" are an important way of exercising power in agenda-building processes. The Principal informed the audience that:

Statistics and research can be found to support whatever case people want to argue - so I urge everyone to look carefully at the information they are presented with, and question it. TEE League Tables have been used as one measure of successful or effective schools. According to the 1997 tables, Bunbury SHS was branded ... an under performing school ... the statistics we prefer to quote relate to graduation rates because these include the whole population of Year 12. BSHS graduation rate was approximately 90% in 1997 ... the State average was 84.6% ... in addition to this, our graduation rates were higher than several schools who were in the top band of the TEE League tables -

perhaps their non-TEE students did not get the same deal.  
(Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998)

In contrast to a market view of education provision, the Principal's response to the introduction of a senior campus was located within a communitarian discourse where she emphasised the importance of developing a sense of community and belonging, rather than focusing primarily on academic performance and the rationalisation of resources. Her view that schools primarily serve communities had far greater symbolic appeal at the meeting than the idea that there is a relationship between impersonal markets and schools. She expressed these ideas as follows:

Size of schools is a very important issue to consider. Super schools are of doubtful value in a society where family structures are breaking down ... the notion of bigger is better should be questioned ... BSHS does operate in a family way. [EDWA] referred to the matter of bigger cohorts producing a higher TEE aggregate for students. In the 1997 tables, the best performing school, Carmel, in Perth, had a Year 12 cohort of only 31. In fact, 13 of the 30 top performing schools had cohorts of less than 90. My interpretation of these statistics is that 'smaller is better.' (Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998)

### **Defining *LAEP* as a Flawed Process**

Rocheffort and Cobb (1994, p. 15) maintain that the function of the problem definition process in agenda-building is primarily to "persuade" that a particular construction of an issue reflects reality. Often these processes also contain expressions of how a problem developed, who is responsible, and who or what is responsible for a solution. In relation to *LAEP*, while EDWA administrators defined the issues for *LAEP* to address as the problematic performance of the local senior high school and the solutions as the introduction of middle schools and a senior campus, community representatives redefined these issues at the public meetings. The redefinition of these problems on the public agenda by a coalescing of interests at the local level, while continuing to identify school closures as a problem, also defined the *LAEP* process used to arrive at the *LAEP* Options as flawed. Criticisms of the planning process were also located in a communitarian discourse which emphasised the importance of community, tradition and dialogical processes to arrive at the values that guide the provision of educational services at the local level. The Chairperson of the BSHS School Management Committee, who was also a parent representative, clearly expressed these ideas when he spoke about the deficiencies or problems with *LAEP* and the silencing of community representatives

throughout the process. He held EDWA officials responsible for the poor planning process and argued for “restarting” *LAEP*:

Shared goals and values were never put on the agenda despite several calls for this to occur ... many of the Committee felt they had had little input ... no vote was taken to endorse the recommendations but many felt the Committee had not met its terms of reference ... to date we believe the guidelines for *LAEP* were breached and the process was flawed, and a new process needs to be entered into. (Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998)

The Principal of BSHS did not directly attribute blame for what she described as a flawed *LAEP* process, but located her solutions within a communitarian discourse. She emphasised the importance of community values being incorporated into the planning and decision-making process and told the public meeting that:

As Principal of the school, the process, however, was flawed, as has been admitted tonight, particularly because the planning principles were not framed as the community would wish. There is a need for shared goals and values to be arrived at first so that appropriate planning decisions can be made. (Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998)

At the end of the public meeting, *LAEP* was clearly on the political agenda at the local level when the Member for Bunbury stated that the way EDWA officials had managed the *LAEP* was clearly flawed. His solution, which the meeting endorsed, was to approach the Minister for Education on behalf of the community with the following proposal:

- to freeze the process, to allow the community a real opportunity to get involved in the *LAEP* process ...
- to restructure the *LAEP* process, so you aren't put in the invidious position of having to prove that Bunbury Senior High School should be retained - when it should be EDWA having to prove that it should go;
- to re-state the commitment given in 1996 (when this brick and tile glider of a plan last appeared) that no change would occur until Bunbury community agreed; and
- to come to Bunbury and meet with all parties - especially those who are feeling threatened by this proposal - the students, parents and teachers of Bunbury Senior High School. (Fax to *LAEP* community representatives, August 27, 1998)

The BSHS public meeting passed, by a large majority, a key resolution that *LAEP* representatives would:

Prepare a statement of concerns around the LAEP process to date and develop a revised LAEP planning process for presentation to the Hon Minister for Education during his visit to Bunbury to meet with community representatives. (Transcription of Public Meeting, BSHS, August 26, 1998)

This resolution clearly indicated, within this public arena, that there was a high level of agreement that not only were school closures defined as a problem but that the planning process used to develop the *LAEP* Options was flawed. The blame for these problems was clearly attributed to EDWA officials and the solution rested with the Minister for Education.

### **The Politics of Blame and Trust**

Barnes et al. (2001, p. 4) suggest that agenda-building processes, and the way problems are constructed, are often contested where there is “little trust” between citizens and officials. In relation to *LAEP*, both public meetings were arenas where members of the community challenged EDWA officials’ agenda-building processes in relation to school closures and the construction of the problems with the local schools. At these meetings, EDWA officials were publicly accused of misleading and distorting information provided to the community in relation to EDWA’s agenda for education restructuring in Bunbury. A local school representative also told me that, “there was a huge amount of damage done in terms of trust for the Education Department and their agenda and what they were trying to do and how they were trying to do it ... it was a very, very disappointing process” (Senior school administrator, personal communication, November 30, 2004).

In contrast to the community’s views, many of the EDWA officials who spoke about the lack of trust between the community and EDWA located the issues within a broader discourse of a democratic deficit or a generalised lack of trust in government for which they held the community responsible. From their perspective, it was these issues that constrained the interactions between EDWA and many of the community representatives throughout the enactment of *LAEP*. These ideas were explained by one EDWA official in the following way:

Some people do not trust government ...they do not trust ... bureaucrats ... [the community] believed they weren't being told the whole truth ... their minds were made up ... there was no way we could convince them otherwise. They just thought that we [EDWA]

were going through the process and were going to manipulate the process so that somehow or other it came up with what we originally wanted ... there was no real trust between the community and the Education Department whatsoever. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

For the issue of trust to emerge very early in *LAEP* as one of the key discourses that defined the lived experience of the relationship between many community representatives and EDWA officials represents somewhat of a paradox, particularly in light of the State's emphasis on community participation and the importance of local knowledge in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a). Furthermore, this policy manoeuvre or discourse by the State toward community participation in policy decision-making emerged across many liberal democracies throughout the 1980s and, as Bickerstaff and Walker (2005, p. 2123) suggest, "in response to a perceived crisis of legitimation in government and a questioning of the normative and functional adequacy of democratic institutions and the rights and responsibilities of citizens." Dialogue or deliberative processes between citizens, their elected representatives and officials charged with the delivery of public policy is assumed to produce more stable democracies and to redress the growing distrust of professional authority and expertise (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004; Bickerstaff & Walker, 2005; Gaventa, 2004; E. Jones & Gaventa, 2002; Skelcher, Mathur, & Smith, 2004; Vigoda & Yuval, 2003).

While state policies such as *LAEP* articulate inclusive community participation processes as part of the policy rhetoric, as Codd (1999) asserts, tensions often emerge in participatory practice because discourses of neo-liberalism, economic rationalism and managerialism, which are dominant in many liberal democracies, erode trust. Along similar lines, Olssen et al. (citing O'Neill, 2004, p. 196) argue that managerialism and economic rationalism contain questionable ethical assumptions and an associated "culture of accountability" that "distort[s] the proper aims of professional practice and foster[s] less, rather than more trust between professionals and the public." Often, as was the case in *LAEP*, "the actions of individuals (as moral agents)" are identified as producing a "culture of distrust" rather than the ideological forces of economic rationalism and managerialism, which produce an institutional environment that governs and structures policy actors' social practices (Codd, 1999, p. 45). The ideology of economic rationalism has the primary objective of achieving total rationalisation of the agencies of the state to bring them in line with the policy prescriptions of free-market

economics and corporate managerialism (Hazledine, 1998). These ideas about market competition mean that the primary aim of public services is to be efficient and responsive to consumer demand so that consumers can exercise market choice. Community participation processes need, therefore, to be managed in a way that ensures that the provision of quality education in a competitive market is efficient, effective and accountable and that the services are cost effective. Codd (1999) concludes that the new forms of managerial control in bureaucratic institutions are now more dominant than the notion of trust as a foundation of professional ethics or participatory democracy that values building a culture of trust between citizens and public officials.

The participants' lived experience of *LAEP* illustrates how managerialist and economic rationalist discourses produce relationships where not only is trust eroded but the policy process becomes replete with tensions and contradictions. While the idea of improving educational choice and quality is held up by EDWA officials as a driver for reform, this idea is located within a managerialist discourse that values the individual consumer's needs as determined by educational experts rather than planning for the provision of services for the common good through a collective decision-making process at the local level. So, while at the level of policy rhetoric *LAEP* focuses on increasing the involvement of community participation, at the same time there is a strengthening of managerial control by EDWA officials that leaves participants with limited voice and power to determine what type of educational services are provided at the local level. As Gilbert (2005, p. 456) observes, "managerialism has colonized discourses of participation (political voice) and consumerism (market choice), giving rise to a new form of actor and economic behaviour of customer as consumer" to the extent that local knowledge and collective decision-making is not valued. At the micro level of policy enactment in *LAEP*, discourses of managerialism and economic rationalism guide the social practices of EDWA officials and produce low levels of trust between EDWA officials and many *LAEP* representatives. These tensions and conflicts are evident at both public meetings in relation to:

- the nature of expectations and the lived experience of community participation in *LAEP* decision-making;
- the purpose of public schools; and
- the dominance of managerial efficiency and the nature of quality as defined by EDWA versus the educational concerns of community members.

## INTENSIFYING LOCAL RESISTANCE TO *LAEP*: TACTICS AND POLITICAL MANOEUVRES

Throughout the period following the public meetings in August and September, 1998, a loose coalition of influential voices emerged at the local level which publicly legitimated the core activists' resistance to the closing of BSHS and the construction of *LAEP* as a flawed process. In other words, the increased salience, legitimation and expansion of the problems with *LAEP* in the public arena were through multi-layered forms of networking and alliance building (Appadurai, 2002; Edelman, 2001) and the formation of "discourse coalitions" (Hajer, 1993, p. 45). Through these "discourse coalitions", knowledge, power and styles of activism interacted to create alternative participatory spaces from which to campaign against EDWA's actions. This loose coalition of interests comprised individuals and groups such as Members of State Parliament, Shire Councillors, academics, political candidates, and the BSHS Alumni President (who was also the President of the Bunbury branch of the Liberal Party). All of these groups had access to resources to oppose *LAEP* and possessed high levels of social and cultural capital which legitimated their construction of the problems with *LAEP* and their challenge to the legitimacy of bureaucratic and political decision-making. One of the participants explained how this loose coalition, while comprised of groups representing different political interests, shared common ground in the way the problems with *LAEP* were constructed:

It was confused because you had people like the President of the local Bunbury Liberal Party and power brokers, you had ex Bunbury people who were out there bubbling up who were supportive of what we were doing ... we were held together by a communitarian philosophy about community, history, heritage, and values. We all know that heritage is tied to conservatism but none the less I could relate to that, so there was a joining together across quite different critical positions which threw EDWA ... so old Bunburyites were saying I went to this high school. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

This parent also made the point that this coalescence of various interests reflected the importance of the local context and the nature of living in a regional centre where networks interact through regular face to face contact. She suggested that, unlike other *LAEP* processes, Bunbury had a particular "demography" whereby "we had relationships and networks across the community, and some history, and we were building those relationships" (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004).



## **Creating Alternative Participatory Spaces: Resisting Being Silenced**

As the opposition to school closures gained momentum at the local level, policy issues were increasingly being defined outside of the institutionalised policy arenas or “invited” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) policy spaces, not only by the core group of *LAEP* activists, but also by a range of community interest groups. As Cornwall (2002b) suggests, this political manoeuvre can entail levering open other participatory spaces for the expression of counter voices. The “Thirdspace” (Soja, 1996, p. 68 ) or “claimed/created” (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) spaces is where policy actors reject hegemonic space by creating alternative spaces for expression. For concerns to be voiced and heard, various tactics need to be developed to transform the very nature of discourse within spaces for participation. One parent described the type of strategies used as well as the importance of the campaign at the community level for challenging and resisting pre-determined policy outcomes:

The campaign was amazing. First, it involved networking and public meetings; second, information sharing; third, a very strong media campaign; fourth, lobbying politicians and; fifth, an input into *LAEP* meetings. A key part of the campaign was informing parents through information. Two schools' P & Cs joined, that was Bunbury Senior High and Bunbury Primary ... I would emphasise that the backbone was that strong campaign with networking among an amazing range of people in the whole community who contributed to the campaign in lots of different ways. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004)

One of the other parent activists explained how the campaign developed and the various tactics and political manoeuvres used to lever open alternative participatory spaces at the local level:

Some of what we're doing was around community development. We were certainly doing a lot of grass roots development, to get people onside and to try to get people a voice. We were trying to find a way to include different opinions ... so we were using tactics, such as producing alternative Minutes and creating alternative forums and going to the mass media. The walk out and going to the mass media were deliberate strategies ... it was pure resistance if you look at Frierean ideas. We were resisting what we saw as an inappropriate abuse of power. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004)

Fraser's (1997, p. 81) notion of “counter-publics” also offers a useful way to conceptualise the nature of the resistance and tactics used to lever open alternative participatory spaces. “Claimed/created” participatory spaces (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26), like

“counter-publics”, are “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser, 1997, p. 81). Such counter-publics may be the source of different norms and alternative values about the process of dialogue and about the acknowledgement of difference in the way the process of representation is conducted. Fraser (1997) emphasises the development of diverse public arenas within which to construct and circulate alternative discourses as a powerful strategy for challenging official definitions of policy issues. In relation to *LAEP*, resistance by interest groups to official issue definitions and solutions was sustained by the development of “parallel discursive arenas” (Fraser, 1997, p. 81) through tactics such as:

- the development of alternative *LAEP* planning arenas and Minutes;
- the wide circulation of *LAEP* discussion papers critiquing the *LAEP* process;
- the preparation and circulation of an alternative community driven *LAEP* planning process;
- the meetings with politicians and the Minister for Education;
- the development of media releases by *LAEP* activists and other interest groups;
- and
- the development of ongoing reports on *LAEP* to P & Cs and school communities via newsletters.

At a micro level, many of the *LAEP* representatives emphasised how they used “dialogic” (Barnes et al., 2006, p. 196) processes to keep their school communities informed about the issues relating to *LAEP* and to receive feedback about issues. This feedback came via the P & C, informal contact with parents and through the circulation of prepared documents to all parents. Most of the information circulated was derived from the *LAEP* discussion papers developed by the core activists. One parent representative explained how he used these processes to continually inform and receive feedback from his school community about *LAEP*:

I would always report back to the P & C about what was happening with *LAEP* and I also wrote newsletters to all parents which went out with the school newsletter. I would actually send out to the whole school community photocopies of extra documents, extracts of my notes from meetings and statements on what I felt and believed about the process. In particular, I sent out warnings of concerns about

the *LAEP* and also sought feedback from parents about *LAEP*. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004)

This parent representative also explained that extensive networking occurred between schools to distribute information as well as to retain a consistent discourse in the public arena about school closures and the *LAEP* process. One very important political manoeuvre by the group of core activists was to continually develop a series of discussion papers that outlined issues such as:

- EDWA's perceived history of hidden agendas in relation to school closures;
- the important role of schools in the community;
- a critique of EDWA's statistics and arguments supporting its claims of performance problems with the local senior high schools;
- a critique of EDWA's arguments justifying the move to middle schools and senior campuses; and
- a discussion of the problems with and the undemocratic nature of the *LAEP* process.

The *LAEP* discussion documents compiled by the core activists, which called for broad-based political opposition to *LAEP*, were circulated widely at the local level and were consistently distributed to the Premier, the Minister for Education, the Director-General EDWA, politicians and to government bodies such as the Public Sector Standards Committee. This important tactical manoeuvre at the local level provided a clear definition of the problems with *LAEP* that gave other local interest group a basis from which to develop their arguments and actions for opposing *LAEP*. Hilgartner and Bosk (1988) point out that documents of this nature detail the ideal social problem claim because:

- they clearly assert that a problem exists;
- they have symbolic appeal, which emphasises the importance of the problem;
- the ideas of "causal responsibility and normative (political or moral) responsibility" are attributed; and
- solutions are posed to address or redress the potential harm (p. 62).

In a letter to the Minister for Education, dated September 25, 1998 (see Appendix 15), the President of the BSHS Alumni (who was also the President of the local branch of the Liberal Party) provided information from the core activists' *LAEP* discussion documents

to oppose the closure of BSHS. The symbols he drew on to argue for the retention of BSHS were located within a communitarian discourse that emphasised the importance of history, heritage and the local ownership of BSHS. He negated any notion that there was a problem with academic performance at the BSHS by emphasising the significant opportunities the BSHS had created for local citizens throughout the past decades. The symbolic importance of the BSHS as part of the historical local context was also emphasised when he drew the Minister's attention to the fact that *LAEP* was occurring in the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of BSHS.

Dissatisfied with the response from the Minister for Education and local EDWA officials, the Chairperson of the BSHS Alumni wrote to all Alumni members requesting a contribution to establish a fighting fund to stop the closure of BSHS. Most of the information provided in the letter to BSHS Alumni members was quoted from the documents circulated by the core activist group, and defined the problems as school closures and a flawed *LAEP* process that needed to be redressed by the Minister for Education (Chairperson of the BSHS Alumni, personal communication, November 15, 2004).

At the same time as the BSHS Alumni mobilised, the Bunbury City Council Mayor, who had met with EDWA administrators a number of times regarding the closure of BSHS, requested one of the *LAEP* representatives with whom he had a professional relationship to prepare a *LAEP* issue paper for Council. The paper, *Towards a Better Framework for Education Planning in the Bunbury District* (Community representative, August 1998), identified the problems with *LAEP* and proposed an alternative *LAEP* planning process (see Appendix 16). The Bunbury City Council passed a resolution to form a City of Bunbury *LAEP* Committee, chaired by the Labor candidate for Bunbury, to prepare "a report of findings for submission to ... the Minister and the Bunbury District Office (City of Bunbury *LAEP* Committee Meeting Minutes, September 7, 1998). The Bunbury City Council also resolved to meet with the Minister for Education to oppose school closures and to appeal to the Minister for Heritage to heritage list the BSHS as soon as possible (Bunbury City Council Meeting Minutes, August 18, 1998).

The contestation of *LAEP* continued at the *LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee meetings where resistance intensified to the way in which *LAEP* was being conducted by EDWA officials. In a letter to Primary and Secondary Principals at the beginning of

August, 1998, the District Director (Schools) advised that the Director-General EDWA had accepted the *Draft Options Plan* developed by the Secondary Drafting Committee for the Bunbury District and that the secondary *LAEP* consultation phase on the Committee's nine Options was to commence immediately and to conclude by April 1999. The letter also advised that the *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee was to be convened and the primary *LAEP* process was to commence immediately and to be completed by the end of 1998 (Letter from Director General EDWA to District Director, August 20, 1998).

The first *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting was on September 17, 1998 and represented a focusing event for many of the teacher, non-teacher and community *LAEP* representatives. Because of the lack of trust between EDWA officials and many of the *LAEP* representatives, at the meetings some participants were increasingly reluctant to play the passive role expected of them by EDWA officials. Contesting and resisting the EDWA officials' legitimacy to determine how the *LAEP* meetings would proceed became a defining feature at these meetings. While EDWA administrators sought to impose rules of deliberation, some participants resisted and challenged what they perceived as the unequal relationship and used collective action to influence the way the political agenda was shaped and to increase the visibility and legitimacy of their issues and claims. Through their objection to the discourse of expertism and the technocratic planning process, the *LAEP* representatives challenged the assumed roles and identities of the EDWA officials. Barnes et al. (2003, p. 395) note how the exercising of power by interest groups to shape the definition of issues and to establish the terms of legitimate discourse is discursive and is based on claims to knowledge and expertise. One parent described EDWA's exercising of power to control the meeting agenda and process emerged as a key focusing event at the first *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting on September 17, 1998:

No motions were allowed at that meeting. There was going to be no measure of true open opinion of the group. The representatives didn't get a chance to debate some Options and then vote on them. I was extremely disturbed by the manipulation by the Department. It was quite clear that they [EDWA] were going to quietly control the process ... it was very clear that the community was not going to be given a fair role and that it was going to be a highly manipulated process. (Parent representative, personal communication, March 5, 2005)

Another parent described the first *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting on September 17, 1998, as a “famous meeting” where “a bizarre conversation went on for twenty minutes” as to whether it was a meeting or not. She explained:

We called a point of order and the EDWA officials declared that we couldn't call a point of order because it wasn't a meeting. EDWA said 'in the end we are the ones who decide.' I just thought what is this about ... a discourse around control and management and that's when I really thought the whole thing had just lost the plot. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

A number of senior EDWA officials also identified this meeting as a key focusing event because they believed that they were conducting the *LAEP* process in accordance with the requirements of the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) which justified their roles and authority to determine meeting agendas and processes. They interpreted this *Framework* as legitimating their formal authority to establish the rules of dialogue and to control the meeting process through setting agendas or the boundaries around discussion. As Lukes (1974, p. 21) suggests, power may also be exercised through manipulating the agenda to control what issues are or are not discussed and the questions that are suppressed or addressed. This form of hidden power enables certain people and institutions to maintain their influence by the control of who accesses the decision-making table and what issues are on the agenda. These dynamics operate on many levels and may serve to exclude and devalue the concerns and representation of different voices. In many respects, while it was this hidden form of power that many of the elected participants actively resisted at *LAEP* meetings, EDWA officials viewed their disruptive actions as deliberate and illegitimate challenges to the EDWA officials' perceived formal power. As one EDWA official detailed:

At the first [*LAEP* Primary] meeting, they wanted it run by formal meeting procedure and I said 'well this is actually not a formal meeting, this is a process of talking about issues and we may well go one or two nights without having any motions or decisions.' Formal meeting procedure says everybody has one say or whatever. I actually rejected that and said 'no, but we will record motions and agreements when the time's right but we're not going to have formal meeting procedure.' Now it actually didn't say in the policy that this didn't have to be run or did have to be run as a formal meeting, but it was just a sensible call ... this all caught me by surprise because I thought we would just be having a friendly chat about where we might be going. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

Following the first *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting on September 17, 1998, the core activist group prepared a media release titled, *Local Area Education Planning a Sham*, which was published by the local newspaper. The article critiqued the manner in which the planning meeting was conducted and drew attention to the attempts by EDWA officials to silence community representatives (see Appendix 17).

In a letter to their school communities, the core activists detailed the events at the first *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting. The information provided was drawn from an alternative set of Minutes taken by one of the *LAEP* activists on the basis that those provided by EDWA did not reflect the highly contested nature of the meeting. Again, the problem was defined as an undemocratic planning process conducted by EDWA officials, which left community representatives feeling silenced and unable to represent the interests of their communities. The representatives called on parents to register their concerns about school closures with the Minister for Education and argued that EDWA's agenda to close schools had resulted in a flawed *LAEP* process. Parents were also called on to sign a petition. This petition requested that the Minister for Education reject the plan to close BSHS and reaffirm his promise that no changes would be made to the existing educational structure. The petition contained 1,680 signatures and was presented to the Western Australian Parliament (School Plight Taken to State Parliament, 1998, September 23, p. 18). Following the presentation of this petition to the Western Australian Parliament, a series of parliamentary questions was posed to elicit the reasons for the proposed school closures and the conduct of EDWA officials in the *LAEP* planning process (Local politician, personal communication, December, 21, 2004). Clearly, *LAEP* and school closures were now on the political agenda.

Following the first *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting on September 17, 1998, the core activist group proposed an alternative *LAEP* planning forum that comprised elected representatives from various stakeholder groups at the local level. Special attention was directed at attracting student and Indigenous representatives. As a way to lever open other participatory spaces, the group was prepared to operate outside the formal *LAEP* committee process and, following their consultation with the local community, to make recommendations on the education plan for the local area and to present the report to the Minister for Education. The group proposed that the District Director (Schools) participate in this forum as an executive assistant to the Chair to collect information called for by the alternative planning committee (Parent

representative, personal communication, November 11, 2004). While this forum had no formal legitimacy from EDWA's perspective, it was clearly an act of resistance designed to provide other arenas to exercise agency and voice in relation to education restructuring. This political manoeuvre was also a sign that the social activists had rejected the "invited" (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) policy space and had created an alternative space through which they could develop opportunities for more effective participation. As Fraser (1997) asserts, when challenging hegemonic participatory spaces, an important tactic is to develop diverse public arenas within which alternative discourses are invented and circulated because they provide a basis from which to challenge official definitions of needs, interests and identities.

### **Lobbying the Minister for Education to Restart the Flawed *LAEP* Process**

As agreed at the BSHS public meeting in early October 1998, the Coalition Member for Bunbury advised the *LAEP* community representatives that he had organised a meeting with the Minister for Education, in Bunbury, to discuss with them the issues with *LAEP*. EDWA representatives were not invited to attend the meeting. In his fax to community representatives regarding the meeting, the Member challenged the "ideology of expertism" (I. Young, 1990, p. 80) of EDWA officials. He questioned the EDWA officials' expertise to conduct *LAEP* and requested that an alternative *LAEP* planning process be prepared by community representatives for the Minister for Education. His fax stated:

I think what we need to do is determine whether the current process can start again from scratch. The Minister should agree that the current process is flawed and the Bunbury *LAEP* should be abandoned. I would like our meeting to give him a new process .... I wouldn't be surprised if there wasn't more relevant expertise, planning, community consultation, in the Bunbury Senior High School group than there is in the whole Education Department, so would you be prepared to be involved, or help drive a group which would design a proper process? (Fax from Member for Bunbury to community representatives, August 27, 1998)

In a media statement, the Member for Bunbury reiterated his support for the community activists rather than EDWA representatives and his opposition to the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools (see Appendix 18). The meeting between the Minister for Education and community representatives occurred in Bunbury on October 7, 1998. At this meeting, the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives made a formal



presentation to the Minister opposing the closure of BSHS and the introduction of middle schools and a senior campus. They also critiqued what they regarded as a flawed *LAEP* process. The representatives requested that *LAEP* re-commence, and they provided the Minister with an alternative *LAEP* process which they had developed for the Bunbury City Council, titled *Towards a Better Framework for Education Planning in the Bunbury District* (see Appendix 16). One of the parent representatives explained that they also gave the Minister a document titled, *Schools and the Community* (see Appendix 19), which emphasised the importance of planning to reflect the local community context (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005).

Following the meeting, all of the community representatives expressed the opinion that they did not feel that their issues were being taken seriously, and that the Minister's response further confirmed that there was an agenda to introduce a senior campus and middle schools in Bunbury. One of the parents explained her issue with the way in which the Minister responded to the community representatives:

The classic case, I guess, is when we did the presentation to the Minister. Now, he was actually quite arrogant when he came down here. We did our presentation and you could tell from his body language that he wasn't listening. He stood up and gave us a complete whitewash of why we didn't really understand the issues and that middle schooling was the best model and it works in Perth ... he thought you parents and teachers just don't understand you're living in the past and this is the new way of doing things. In his view, it's all about progress. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004)

Another parent explained that the Minister stated at the meeting "... 'no, it's going to happen ... we will never ever have again Years 8, 9 10, 11 and 12 together.'" She added that "he had an agenda to build that senior campus, he treated us so shabbily ... he just wasn't interested" (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004). The meeting with the Minister was a key focusing event for another parent representative who said that it provoked the community representatives to further mobilise opposition to *LAEP* at the local level. He explained that, after meeting with the Minister, "things became a bit more political, we got the media involved to just show what's going on here ... we wrote a very eloquent letter to the Minister ... the political process was recognised and we'll use it if necessary" (Parent representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004). A senior EDWA official, who met with the Minister following the meeting with the community representatives, said that the Minister had dismissed their concerns and

supported the way in which EDWA was conducting *LAEP*. He also said, “the Minister was more worried about them than the process” (Senior EDWA District Office representative, March 25, 2005).

Further confirmation that the Minister for Education supported EDWA’s plans to introduce a senior campus emerged in a radio interview following the meeting with the community representatives. In this interview, while the Minister acknowledged that many of the BSHS buildings needed substantial upgrading, he suggested that there was a need “to look at Bunbury as the site of a senior college” and that “Bunbury Senior High School as a senior college might just become the best secondary education outside Perth, if not as good as anything in Perth” (Transcript of radio interview with Minister for Education, October 8, 1998).

As a way of voicing their dissatisfaction with the meeting with the Minister for Education and his comments in the radio interview, *LAEP* representatives encouraged their school communities to oppose school closures and the flawed *LAEP* process and to lobby the local Member of Parliament, the Minister for Education and the Premier. The *LAEP* representatives also wrote letters to EDWA officials and the Minister for Education demanding that EDWA justify the need for educational restructuring in the form of a senior campus and middle schools. The five community representatives from the three senior high schools who met with the Minister for Education also wrote to him and outlined the basis for their opposition to school closures and the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools (see Appendix 20). They detailed how a flawed *LAEP* process had arrived at the Options for education restructuring in Bunbury. Copies were sent to the Premier, the leader of the Labor opposition party and the local newspapers. Their arguments to retain the current education structure in Bunbury were located in a communitarian discourse that emphasised the importance of community values and an inclusive participatory planning process. The community representatives were also particularly critical of the way in which the Minister negated their concerns and his refusal to entertain restarting the *LAEP* drafting process. They concluded the letter to the Minister as follows:

In those circumstances we are satisfied that our only option is to press for a change at the level of Premier and Cabinet or by change of government ... We will not stand by and watch all of the senior members of our education community of Bunbury steamrolled,

manipulated, and then silenced. (Letter from Parent representatives to the Minister for Education, October 12, 1998)

As a clear indicator that the local *LAEP* issues were on the media agenda, excerpts from the letter to the Minister were published within the week in local and Perth based newspapers. *The West Australian* article was titled *Education Plan Fails Parent Test* (Rechichi, 1998, August 14, p. 44), while the *Bunbury Mail* article, on page one, was titled *Parents Making a Stand* (Ligman, 1998, August 14, p. 1). As reported in the article in the *Bunbury Mail*, the Minister's only concession to the parents' letter was to extend the secondary public consultation period beyond April 1998. In the newspaper article, *Education Plan Fails Parent Test*, the Minister's comments confirmed that EDWA planned to introduce middle schools and a senior campus in Bunbury:

The Department is looking at Years 11 and 12 students attending a new senior campus while younger high school students attend separate middle schools. The Education Department is also looking at selling Bunbury High School, worth \$16 million. [The Minister] has defended the process, saying ... senior colleges would provide an adult learning environment for students with close ties to university and TAFE colleges while separate middle schools would offer more specialist programs directed at younger students ... [The Minister] refused a request by the group to change the drafting process. (Rechichi, 1998, August 14, p. 44)

The media articles clearly defined the issue as a desire on the part of EDWA to restructure education in Bunbury by closing and selling BSHS and introducing middle schools and a senior campus. Furthermore, the flawed *LAEP* process was now publicly sanctioned by the Minister for Education despite the community representatives' opposition to the *LAEP* process used by EDWA to deliver what the representatives regarded as a pre-determined education restructuring agenda in Bunbury.

While the closure of BSHS and the introduction of middle schools and a senior college remained highly contested issues between EDWA officials and the local community, concessions were made by EDWA at the second *LAEP* Primary Drafting Committee meeting on October 20, 1998, when EDWA officials conceded that "we have no place for school closures" (Parent representative's report to BPS P & C meeting, October 26, 1998). In a circular to parents, one of the *LAEP* representatives detailed the list of events and issues that led to the conclusion that the EDWA planned to close BPS and added "parents from several schools have subsequently carried out a campaign in the media and

with politicians, and due to strong action, I believe that there is much less chance that Bunbury Primary School will be closed” (Circular to BPS parents, October 26, 1998).

At the request of the *LAEP* representatives, the District Director (Schools) wrote to the BPS community and confirmed that the school would not close (Memo from District Director (Schools) in BPS school newsletter, November 17, 1998).

### **Rejecting the Invited Policy Space: Withdrawing Community Participation**

In response to a directive from the Director-General EDWA, the local District Office reconfigured the *LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee to form a *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee. This Committee comprised representatives from both primary and secondary schools and was established to plan for the consultation with the Bunbury Community on the nine *LAEP* Options developed by the *LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee, rather than the District Director’s (Schools) four Options. The directive also stated that the secondary consultation phase was to be completed by April 1999 (EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004).

From November 1998 to March 1999, the *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee met on four occasions. During this period, the *LAEP* activists continued to claim in the public arena, via the media, and letters to the Minister that the *LAEP* drafting process was fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, they demanded that the consultation phase not commence until the *LAEP* Options had been developed properly and were endorsed by all committee members (Parent representative, personal communication, November 1, 2004). The *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meetings became a site for *LAEP* representatives to resist EDWA’s domination of the process by challenging:

- the legitimacy of committee meeting processes;
- the interpretation by EDWA of community participation;
- the accuracy of the Minutes;
- the silencing by EDWA of the elected EDWA employee/representatives;
- the legitimacy of the *LAEP* Options that the Director-General EDWA had endorsed for consultation;
- the exclusion of discussion about educational values; and
- the power of the community to determine the final *LAEP* outcomes.

Community representatives also requested that a balanced case for the introduction of a senior campus be provided at the *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meetings. The silencing of EDWA employees who were also parent representatives from making public statements about *LAEP* became a highly contested issue at these meetings. Many of the teacher representatives expressed that, throughout *LAEP*, they felt silenced and unable to comment in the public arena because of the implications for their professional careers. While this issue remained unresolved, the inherent contradiction did not escape the SSTUWA's representative who said, at a *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting "that as an employee, Joe Bloggs - teacher can't express his view, but can Joe Bloggs-Citizen?" (*LAEP* Consultative Committee meeting Minutes, November 10, 1998). At the same time, *The West Australian* newspaper ran an article, titled *Gag On Teachers Blasted* (Ashworth, 1998, October 27, p. 9), which quoted incidents when EDWA employees had been threatened with disciplinary action after speaking publicly about *LAEP* issues. The newspaper article highlighted a contradiction in that EDWA appeared to be entering an era of shifting power and responsibility for decision-making from the Central Office to schools in an environment that not only silenced teachers but continued to demand corporate loyalty (Ashworth, 1998, October 27, p. 9).

The next major focusing event identified by many of the participants occurred at the fourth *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting in February 1999. The event was partly triggered by a direct quote in a local newspaper from a local EDWA official which he made on behalf of the *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee. He was reported as stating that "schools now have to make it easier for students to go on to university or TAFE and we think a senior campus is the best way to do that" (Kent, 1999, February 25, p. 6). Also, the *Bunbury Herald* (Kent, 1999, February 16, p. 5) quoted an EDWA official as stating "the principals, teachers and community members supported the concept of a senior college." In response to the article, parent representatives challenged the EDWA officials' right to speak on behalf of Committee members and requested that these statements be withdrawn (*LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting Minutes, February 16, 1999).

While not available in the public arena, a series of almost weekly briefing notes was forwarded to the Minister for Education by EDWA District Office officials. In these notes, EDWA officials continued to advocate for a senior secondary college, co-located with TAFE and ECU. They attributed opposition to their proposal to a "small disaffected

group”, and their preferred direction was conveyed to the Minister as “an option opposed by some but supported by many” (Ministerial briefing notes, February 8, 1999).

The issues of educational values and whether the *LAEP* Secondary Drafting Committee had met its terms of reference in developing the *LAEP* Options also emerged as highly contested issues at the initial *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meetings. A number of parent representatives argued that community values should drive the nature of the *LAEP* Options prepared for consultation with the Bunbury community. Community representatives forced a motion to a vote as to whether the Committee should survey community values and then assess the *LAEP* Options against these values. The result of the vote was 12 against and 14 for the motion as counted by EDWA officials (*LAEP* Consultative Committee meeting Minutes, February 16, 1999). The implications of this vote, while not identified in the Minutes, were recorded in the community representatives’ alternative set of Minutes, which stated that EDWA officials “deemed that the majority was not large enough for the vote to count” (*LAEP* alternative Secondary Consultative Committee meeting Minutes, February 16, 1999). One of the parent representatives explained why this meeting was a key focusing event for him.

I can even remember one meeting where we got to the point that everybody was infuriated ... we asked 'look we don't think we have met the terms of reference and we don't think this process is working effectively, let's put it to a vote.' There was a very high percentage of people from the Education Department and the vote actually ended up in the majority of people saying that they didn't feel that the terms of reference had been met, or that the process was being run effectively. EDWA said, 'well, the majority is not big enough so I'm dismissing it' ... another critical incident where everyone just shakes their heads ... for those of us who knew something about policy and the way these things get legitimated in the system, this was ringing some very big alarm bells. (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2005)

At the following *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting on March 10, 1999, one of the parent representatives contested the Minutes from the previous meeting (February 16, 1999) on the basis that his statements had been misrepresented. At the meeting on February 16, 1999, he had questioned the authority and the legitimacy of the EDWA officials to state to the media that the Committee supported the concept of a senior college for Bunbury and requested that EDWA publicly rescind the statement. At the meeting on March 10, 1999, the EDWA official claimed that he had not agreed to rescind the media statement. At this meeting, other Committee members also challenged

the way in which issues were recorded in the Minutes, the timing of their distribution and the lack of inclusion of contested issues. The conflict between EDWA officials and community representatives escalated to the point that five of the *LAEP* community representatives walked out of the meeting and issued a comprehensive media statement on March 11, 1999 (see Appendix 21). One of the parent representatives explained that “the walk out” and the use of the mass media to voice community concerns were resistance strategies to challenge oppressive power relations between EDWA and community representatives (Parent representative, personal communication, November 10, 2004).

This meeting also represented a key focusing event for a senior EDWA official who explained that, for him, it confirmed his view that the community representatives wanted to control *LAEP*. He detailed the events that led to community representatives taking a vote of “no confidence” in the process and his perception of his role in the conflict:

I'd actually made the decision before I went to the meeting [*LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting on March 10, 1999] that there's only one item on the agenda. So we get in and I said you've read the agenda and I want you to start on this Option. A representative said 'We haven't agreed to the Minutes yet' and I said 'okay yes I know that, but we're just having one item on this agenda'. We didn't call them Minutes ... they said 'they're not a formal part of the process until they have been agreed to or the outcomes agreed to.' I said, 'I accept that, but it doesn't matter if we miss doing it this meeting we'll do both lots at the next meeting, on to work.' At that stage five people got up and walked out and came back and moved a motion of no confidence in the process. So there was a letter to the Minister that I wasn't following due process ... I'd do it again ... I thought this was a group who are hell bent on keeping the status quo. (Senior EDWA District Office representative, personal communication, March 2, 2005)

Following the *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting on March 10, 1999, an article, titled *Parents Storm Out of Improper Meeting*, appeared in the *South Western Times* (Kent, 1999, March 18, p. 7). This article detailed all of the community representatives' concerns as outlined in their media release and also stated that the *LAEP* process had “broken down” to the extent that parents had called on the Minister for Education to provide an independent mediator to address their concerns.

Within days of this meeting, community representatives informed their school communities via newsletters and presentations to their P & Cs of the issues arising from the *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting on the March 10, 1999. Parents

were urged to write to their local politician, the Minister for Education and the Premier to lodge their opposition to the *LAEP* consultative process and to support a vote of no confidence in the manner in which EDWA officials were conducting the process. In a letter to the Premier, one parent stated that she was “dismayed” by the *LAEP* process because “there is evidence that the process is being manipulated by [EDWA] ... I urge you to intervene ... before people’s faith in the political process is shattered” (Letter to the Premier, March 15, 1999).

Another parent, in a letter to the Acting Director-General EDWA, Peter Browne, raised concerns about the lack of formal meeting process in *LAEP* (Letter to Acting Director-General EDWA, March 22, 1999). She disputed any notion that only four parents were “trying to slow the process down,” as reported in an article in the *South Western Times* (Kent, 1999, February 25, p. 5). In a letter of response, the Acting Director-General EDWA acknowledged the importance of meeting procedures and conceded that the *LAEP* process had broken down (Letter of response from Acting Director-General EDWA, August 2, 1999). During this period a series of questions was asked in the Western Australian Parliament that supported community representatives and questioned the process used to determine *LAEP* outcomes (Hansard, 1999, p. 6745).

### **Restarting *LAEP* and Appointing a New Chairperson**

Following the conflict during the *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee meeting on March 10, 1999, a number of parent representatives, the three senior high school Principals and the local politicians met with the Minister for Education to discuss their concerns about the *LAEP* process. A parent representative told me that this meeting was organised by one of the local politicians who contacted him and said “‘I know I’m in trouble ... would you be prepared to speak to the Minister again?’ I said to him, ‘yes ... your position here in Bunbury is very tenuous because your Minister has sanctioned a disgraceful process’” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 11, 2004).

In preparation for the meeting with the Minister, the parent representatives identified for discussion the following questions which addressed the management of the *LAEP* process:

- How can a committee endorse a plan without being able to make decisions?



- Why aren't standard meeting procedures adhered to and why can't Minutes be discussed and subsequently endorsed?
- How can the process be seen to be fair and open when [EDWA] has proposed closure of the Bunbury Senior High School and the Bunbury Primary School, has made public statements that the consultative committee supports a senior campus and middle school model, and has made recent public statements that the Bunbury Senior High School is substandard and should be replaced?
- Is it appropriate for the District Director to state that there are only four parents that are the problem and everyone else is satisfied? The parents have been democratically elected to represent large numbers of people. We know that there is extensive dissatisfaction. (Parent representatives' discussion points for Ministerial meeting, March 22, 1999)

All of the parent representatives stated that the meeting with the Minister represented a critical focusing event because it was the first time their concerns had been taken seriously. Furthermore, the Minister for Education agreed to their request to appoint an independent chairperson to facilitate the *LAEP* meetings. One parent representative explained the significance of the meeting with the Minister for Education in the following way:

The Minister came down and listened much more carefully to us - obviously he had been told that the Party was at risk at the next election ... he conceded that we were entitled to have a real consultation process. I don't remember him conceding that we were on the right track and the Years 8-12 model was better. He allowed the appointment of what was a genuine and independent chairperson. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004)

Following the meeting with the Minister for Education, an Extraordinary *LAEP* Secondary Consultative meeting was called on May 26, 1999, when senior personnel from the EDWA Central Office announced that a new chairperson had been appointed by the Minister for Education to assist with the *LAEP* process. In a media statement the same day, the Minister for Education stated that "to ensure the effectiveness of the planning process, a very experienced senior educator has been appointed as the *LAEP* coordinator to assist the ... [District Office] in all matters relating to *LAEP*." He also said "recent discussion of possible school closures in Bunbury should be put aside because there has been no decision to close any school in the area" (Minister for Education, May 26, 1999).

Participants presented various reasons why the ministerial appointment of a *LAEP* facilitator represented a key focusing event. For many of the senior Central Office administrators it was an acknowledgement that the *LAEP* process in Bunbury had reached a point where the nature and degree of the conflict was intractable and required intervention from the EDWA Central Office. One Central Office administrator said that the *LAEP* process had become unworkable and it was necessary for Central Office personnel to intervene because “there was no way that this process would continue with the people involved ... there was an area of misunderstanding that was irrevocable ... people thought they weren’t being told the whole truth and also, on the other side, people weren’t listening” (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004).

Many of the community and teacher representatives identified the introduction of a new chairperson as significant because it indicated that the Minister had heard their concerns about the *LAEP* process and their request for an impartial facilitator. While most of the community representatives supported the replacement of the *LAEP* chairperson, two participants felt that it allowed some EDWA officials to be used as scapegoats for systemic issues in relation to EDWA’s agenda to introduce senior campuses across Western Australia. As one parent representative explained:

In some ways ... [some District Office officials] became scapegoats in the end. They were at pains not to be seen to be removing ... [them] because that would be an admission that they had done it wrong. I don't remember it as being overt - just replaced, it was like this consultation business is complex and we need to get someone who is good at consultation. So they called in someone else. (Parent representative, personal communication, December 1, 2004)

In a media statement, the Minister conceded that there were issues with the way in which the *LAEP* process was conducted and announced a “new direction for the *LAEP* process.” However, his statement that he “was keen to see effective plans for better use of school resources in Bunbury” indicated that an economic rationalist discourse remained dominant. Furthermore, while he conceded that there would be no school closures, he continued to promote the introduction of a senior campus:

The benefits of middle schooling and senior campuses need to be explained and opportunities to enhance relationships between senior years and further education and training such as TAFE and university

should be thoroughly explored by school communities. (Minister for Education, May 26, 1999)

At the Extraordinary *LAEP* meeting on May 26, 1999, at which it was announced that an independent facilitator would be brought in to oversee *LAEP* in Bunbury. It was agreed that:

- the time-line for community consultation on the *LAEP* Options was extended;
- the meetings would be conducted by the independent facilitator;
- the information would be provided which presented the pros and cons for a senior campus and middle schools;
- the meetings would adhere to standard meeting process and format; and
- the Minutes and other supporting documents would be circulated well in advance of the meetings. (Extraordinary *LAEP* meeting Minutes, May 26, 1999)

In a follow-up letter to the *LAEP* representatives, the new chairperson confirmed that the Minister for Education had granted an extension for the *LAEP Draft Options Plan* and consultation report until the latter half of 2000. Furthermore, the Committee would now explore the issues relating to all possible models including the retention of the current educational structures in Bunbury (Letter from *LAEP* Chairperson to *LAEP* representatives, July 22, 1999).

### ***LAEP* Options and Consultation with the Bunbury Community**

From June 23, 1999 to June 28, 2000, the *LAEP* Secondary Drafting/Consultative Committee convened on twelve occasions to develop the *LAEP Draft Options Plan* and the process for consultation with the Bunbury community. In recognition of the inadequacies of the previous drafting process, at a Committee meeting on March 7, 2000, it was agreed that the Committee would be called the *LAEP* Drafting/Consultative Committee rather than *LAEP* Secondary Consultative Committee. Committee members unanimously agreed to this motion because it recognised that a new set of *LAEP* Options was being developed by the Committee for consultation with the Bunbury community. Feedback from the community representatives to their school communities about the way in which the *LAEP* process was now being conducted was generally positive. In a letter to his school community, one of the representatives, who had publicly opposed the previous

*LAEP* process, said “a positive trend in the last two meetings has been the acceptance to prepare values and principles to underpin any model that is finally endorsed by the committee for public consultation” (Letter from parent representative to school community, November 30, 1999).

One of the community representatives who had been party to the initiation of a vote of no confidence in the previous *LAEP* process also said that the meetings were more inclusive of the community representatives’ views:

What the new chairperson brought to the process was to ensure that there was a genuine consultation process and to let the community have a voice ... we had the capacity to influence the process ... we had genuine input and decision-making and control as to what we deliberated upon and how we came to outcomes and opinions and recommendations for our group. (Parent representative, personal communication, November 11, 2004)

By April 2000, the *LAEP* Secondary Drafting/Consultative Committee had finalised and endorsed nine *LAEP* Options to be forwarded to the Director-General EDWA for approval for consultation with the Bunbury community (*LAEP* Drafting/Consultative Committee, April, 2000). The Committee had also developed a comprehensive consultation process to be implemented with the Bunbury community (see Appendix 22).

Five days prior to the first of three planned public meetings, the Executive Officer of the *LAEP* Drafting/Consultative Committee was directed by the Acting Director-General EDWA to remove two *LAEP* Options which involved “no high school at Eaton” (Letter from A/Director-General EDWA, April 27, 2000). A pamphlet was distributed outlining the remaining six *LAEP* Options for public consultation (Bunbury District Education Office, 2000b). The Options were divided into three groups:

- *Group A* contained two Options that created a new neighbourhood senior high school in addition to the current [three] senior high schools;
- *Group B* contained one Option that would see BSHS remain as a provider for Years 8-12 with any or all of the senior high schools combining as educational entities with their respective neighbouring schools to become K-12 providers; and
- *Group C* contained three Options. All involved creating a mix of senior high schools and/or middle schools, and a senior campus linked to Edith Cowan University and the South West Regional College of TAFE.

In a newspaper article that provided information about the *LAEP* Options and the different ways of registering a vote, a senior EDWA official promoted the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury:

A new senior campus and system of middle schools has the support of a number of teachers, principals and school staff in the Bunbury community ... government schools have been behind the eight ball for some time ... it's time to embrace change ... the success of other schools which incorporated middle schools ... support[s] the push for a senior campus in Bunbury ... a senior campus would provide ... more curriculum choices and flexibility. (New system gains support, 2000, June 8, p. 12)

In response to this article, one of the *LAEP* representatives wrote to his school community and said:

You may recall that the process of drafting options, adoption of a plan by the Education Department and consulting with the community on that plan, was rejected by the Bunbury community ... there is evidence that the Education Department is philosophically 'locked in' to the middle school and senior campus model. It would also appear that this position is supported by TAFE and Edith Cowan University. Given the very high level at which this position is endorsed or adopted, it will be extremely difficult for this community to have an effective voice in the decision-making process. Given the above, the closure of Bunbury Senior High School or its conversion to a Senior Campus cannot be ruled out. This will have direct implications for our primary school and I would therefore encourage all members of our school community to maintain a strong interest in the *LAEP* process. (Letter from Parent representative to school community, June 10, 2000)

The public consultation process and vote on the six *LAEP* Options occurred across the Bunbury District from May 22, 2000 to June 14, 2000. A total of 769 submissions were received and 86.5 percent of respondents voted for the first option in Option A which was to retain the existing Years 8 to 12 senior high school structure with enhancements (Bunbury District Education Office, 2000a, p. 1). In other words, only 13.5 percent of respondents voted for models in Group C which consisted of a combination of senior high schools and a senior campus. On June 30, 2000, the *Local Area Education Planning, Bunbury District Consultation Secondary Report* (Bunbury District Education Office, 2000a), which details the outcome of the community ballot, was sent to the Director-General EDWA for consideration before being forwarded to the Minister for Education for approval. At the same time, the *LAEP* Drafting/Consultative Committee sent a letter to the Minister for Education expressing concern at the apparent political

interference in the process of community consultation, specifically the pressure applied to withdraw the two Options which did not include a “high school at Eaton” (Letter *LAEP* Drafting/Consultative Committee, June 28, 2000).

Many of the parent, teacher and non-teacher representatives identified the outcome from the consultation process on the *LAEP* Options as a key focusing event because it was a clear statement from the Bunbury community about the preferred model for the provision of secondary education. One teacher representative told me that it was a relief because “the vote was a very clear indication from the community that it wanted all the existing secondary schools to stay as they are now, on their current sites and with the Year structure that they currently have” (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 2, 2004). Many of the parent representatives also felt that the vote was significant because it failed to confirm a perception that the opposition to a senior campus was limited to a small group of activists, and it legitimated their opposition to the original *LAEP* process and the closure of BSHS without community endorsement. Many of the senior EDWA officials, however, held the view that the ballot was not a legitimate representation of the community’s preference for education restructuring in Bunbury. One senior EDWA official explained:

The majority of people just couldn't be bothered saying anything. When you look at the survey returns, there might have been 200 people putting in a ballot but that's a very small group of people making the decision for 40,000 community people. When you look at a bundle of them, all in the same envelope, from thirty kids from English classes at [one of the schools], with all the same boxes ticked you had to wonder about the value of the survey. So yes, there was a lot of opposition but I don't believe it was that deep rooted in the community ... I think there was support for it [a senior campus] but many people just couldn't be bothered saying. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, April 5, 2005)

## **PRODUCING A POLICY SETTLEMENT: REFOCUSING CENTRAL CONTROL**

As Kenway (1990, p. 59) suggests, policy outcomes represent “temporary settlements” on the part of the state as a way of providing solutions to policy issues or problems within highly contested policy environments. The policy outcomes from *LAEP*, while initially being described as ambiguous or inconclusive by many community participants, did, nonetheless, represent a temporary settlement and the State’s response to the complexity

of the competing interests, claims and discourses that emerged from outside and within different sections of the State. One parent said that “there was no formal final signing off to anything” (Parent representative, personal communication, November 3, 2004). A number of EDWA officials also told me that the only formal announcement by the Minister for Education was at Australind Senior High School where he said that a new \$16 million middle school (Years 8-10) would be built at Eaton by 2003. This announcement was some months after the submission of the *Local Area Education Planning, Bunbury District Consultation Secondary Report* (Bunbury District Education Office, 2000a). The day after the Minister made this announcement, the *South Western Times* ran an article titled *Win for schools: Government forced to shelve radical education plans* (Granath, 2000, September 21, p. 1). The article confirmed that the Government planned to build a new middle school at Eaton and constructed this outcome as a community “win over the government” because there was no announcement to close BSHS or to introduce a senior campus (Granath, 2000, September 21, p. 1). Community representatives were, however, dissatisfied with the nature of this form of policy settlement because of the lack of provision to upgrade the existing senior high schools in Bunbury. Furthermore, the announcement was effectively seen as an “interim statement” which offered no overall direction for education restructuring in Bunbury (Granath, 2000, September 21, p. 1). In a letter to the Editor of the *South Western Times* some weeks after the Minister’s announcement, one of the parent representatives was highly critical of the Government’s motives behind this policy settlement when he said:

A great confidence trick has just been played over the future of our high schools, and indirectly our primary schools ... the community has been given the first stage of exactly what it expressly said it didn’t want, namely a middle school containing Years 8-10 students ... the Education Minister announced on September 20 a new Years 8-10 school at Eaton, in contravention of the overwhelming ballot ... to make matters worse, the Minister and the local member have falsely claimed in public relations language that the Government’s decision is ... ‘to support the wishes of local people’ ... when in fact it is the exact opposite. 86% said they did not want any Years 8-10 school. (Community representative, 2000, October 19, p. 10)

### **Achieving Part of the State's Education Restructuring Agenda: 'Steering at a Distance'**

The Minister for Education's announcement that the Government planned to build a middle school at Eaton is an interesting form of policy settlement in the light of many of the senior EDWA officials' comments during the interviews. In particular, the emerging culture in the EDWA Central Office and the Minister's preferred direction for education restructuring across the State was to introduce middle schools and senior campuses (see Chapter Seven). Many of the senior EDWA Central Office officials explained that the Minister's announcement that a middle school would be built at Eaton was a political solution or compromise which enabled EDWA and the Minister to achieve part of their change agenda in the short term. In other words, the policy settlement was developed by the EDWA Central Office policy elites as a way of ensuring that issues of educational quality and choice remained on the educational policy agenda. This point was made by a senior EDWA District Office administrator when he explained that the Minister did not make a formal decision and that he announced Eaton as a Years 8–10 school because "if he had announced a Years 8–12 school there probably wouldn't have been any more choice in Bunbury for another 15 years" (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, March, 2, 2005).

The suggestion by senior EDWA officials that the Central Office and the Minister for Education only achieved part of their education restructuring agenda in Bunbury suggests that, in relation to *LAEP*, the State was not all powerful in shaping and bringing about top-down educational change at the local level of policy enactment. State influence fluctuated so that, at times, the power of the State was focused at a Central and District Office level and at others de-centred with power and control refocused at the community level. In this respect, McLaughlin's (1987, p. 174) observation that policy enactment "simultaneously changes policy problems, policy resources and policy objectives ... [and] new issues, new requirements, and new considerations emerge as the process unfolds" is reflected through the agenda-building and *LAEP* policy enactment process. However, as Kenway (1990) suggests, by establishing the strategies and parameters for determining the nature of policy settlements, the state can exercise significant influence.

While local politics, personalities, interpersonal relationships and acts of collective resistance were important in redefining and legitimating the issues or problems in relation to *LAEP*, as Dery (2000) contends, this does not necessarily mean that the state has



accepted a redefinition of the original problem or local demands. This reflects Ball's (1994a, p. 20) observation that, "... policy texts *enter* rather than simply change power relations" to the extent that actors are unequally placed to advance interests and are constrained by the power relations between different parts of the system. In relation to *LAEP*, the power exercised by the Central Office managerial policy elite to control the outcomes or the nature of the *LAEP* policy settlement was greater than the power exercised by the micro level stakeholders to determine the policy process and outcomes. In other words, what we see in *LAEP* is the rhetoric of local autonomy and community participation in a context of centralised control of decision-making through the policy mechanism of "steering at a distance" (Kickert, 1995, p. 135). Vidovich (1999a, p. 6) contends that an understanding of the mechanism of steering at a distance requires an exploration of the ways the state "operates through localised sites" to achieve centrally determined goals and how "local sites achieve, transform or resist centrally mandated goals."

The "centralising/decentralising tension" (Lingard, 1996, p. 73), or "centre-periphery relations" (Ball, 1990, p. 20), which is now characteristic of the "reconfigured state" (Lingard, 1993, p. 41) as discussed in Chapter Two, is relevant for understanding the relationship between the EDWA Central Office and the local sites which comprise the EDWA District Office and school communities. The New Right policy mechanism of steering at a distance was evident in the way EDWA Central Office officials differentiated between the roles of the centre and the local sites in *LAEP*. A senior EDWA Central Office official explained:

When you do a process like *LAEP* you've got to get the right balance between central directive and local directive ... It's the centre that controls it ... it works well when people understand that the role of District Office in the main is to implement what comes out of the centre because expertise lies here in the Central Office. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

The way another senior Central Office official explained the relationship between the EDWA Central and District offices in relation to *LAEP* represents somewhat of a paradox. What we see in the following comments is a discourse that, while encouraging local participation, also stands alongside a strengthening of central powers of control and direction and a lack of trust in local decision-making. In this regard, the *LAEP* policy enactment process is similar to Cardini's (2006, p. 409) findings that the "rhetoric around

local participation is more related to a legitimisation of central policies ... than a genuine interest in power decentralisation.” These ideas were expressed by a senior EDWA Central Office official:

There was no way you could run it [LAEP] from the Central Office. The people from the Central Office would have been seen as the aliens coming in from out of town. The centre's role was to stay back from the local process, but to monitor, evaluate, intervene, but to allow the process to be local ... the whole LAEP process gives power to the centre to make the decisions and to relieve the local District Director of being identified as the one who's got an agenda. It gets the Minister to carry the can to make the decision. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

One of the ways the State used the policy strategy mechanism of steering at a distance to refocus or exercise power in the local site was through a “discourse of derision” (Ball, 1994a, p. 39). This discourse derided many teachers, parents and principals responsible for resisting the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools and blamed the District Office officials’ poor performance and lack of expertise for the way in which they managed the process. As Smyth (1993, p. 6) suggests, rather than address the tensions and contradictions that emerge from the enactment of a centrally driven policy initiative in a local site, the policy mechanism of steering at a distance passes blame “down the line.” Hence, once the rhetoric of devolution assumes commonsense status (Fairclough, 1989), the discourse of community participation is effective for relocating blame from central sites to local educational sites, schools and individual policy actors (Ball, 1998a; Cardini, 2006; Smyth, 1993; Whitty et al., 1998). In relation to *LAEP*, the discourse of derision that emerged from the Central Office policy elites focused on the effects of District Office autonomy and lack of accountability to the centre throughout the policy enactment process.

As noted previously, a number of senior EDWA officials said that only part of the education restructuring agenda was achieved because of the problems encountered with *LAEP* in Bunbury compared to other areas in Western Australia. They attributed this to the sustained local opposition, which was partly generated by the way in which the District Office managed the process. In other words, the District Office assumed too much autonomy to determine *LAEP* outcomes rather than only attend to process issues. One senior EDWA Central Office administrator described the “problems” with the management of *LAEP* at the local level in the following way:

Things go astray when the district people think that they know what should happen without having the right amount of input from the centre. When you think like that, things go off the rails. Also people like myself have experience to know that, if you're going to say this, then something's going to happen ... people out in the district have nominal charge for the process. They should consult with the centre and say 'what do you think we should do here?' Once that happens then we've got some control. We like to call it checks and balances. I'm not necessarily saying this happened in Bunbury, but what happened is, they go out on their own, release a document which is controversial, then it spins out of control ... that may have happened in Bunbury ... some people think they can do it on their own. We just hit a brick wall. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

Another senior EDWA Central Office official also suggested that the type of outcomes that senior management wanted to attain through *LAEP* were not achieved in Bunbury because of the way in which the process was conducted. Here we see how the policy mechanism of steering at a distance works in a way that the centre distances itself from the problems that emerge when local sites attempt to implement centrally mandated policy agendas. These ideas are contained in the following comments from a senior EDWA Central Office administrator:

There were problems with the way the Department handled Bunbury compared to all other places in WA. We wanted them to say there's this model, and there's this model. That works everywhere in Western Australia but in one place. I'll repeat that, it worked everywhere in Western Australia but in one place ... they [District Office officials] went around it the wrong way and made public comments that they would sell Bunbury Senior High School as an asset without it going through a process. That just politicised the whole process ... the option that the District Office advocated was the obvious rational one. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

Central Office officials told me that the relationship between the District Office and community members deteriorated to the extent that the Central Office was placed in a position of having to intervene in the *LAEP* process at the local level. One of the justifications for direct intervention by the Central Office echoed the flawed *LAEP* discourse advanced by community interests at the local level who claimed that District Office officials lacked community engagement and planning expertise. As one senior official said, "community planning was not the District Office forte" (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004). The Central Office intervention at the local level came in two forms. The initial intervention was to

appoint a Central Office facilitator, to assist with the *LAEP* process in Bunbury. Following the appointment of the facilitator, the other less obvious intervention was, according to a senior Central Office official, to “bring *LAEP* to a close.” He explained that, in practice, this meant that:

In the end we shifted gear. We did, we just took it off the agenda. The town never discussed any Options ... what we did in the end, is we just pulled the plug on Bunbury. We obviously wanted a sensible rational outcome out of Bunbury and I would say that a rational outcome is a senior campus and two middle schools ... when it became patently apparent that we weren't going to get it, we pulled the plug. We let it close down, wait for a later day. Let time pass. (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

### ***Constraints and opportunities***

In achieving central policy agendas while the “reconfigured state” (Lingard, 1993, p. 41) steers at a distance, the nature of the influence exercised at local sites needs to be understood in relation to complex “structures of constraints and opportunities” (Cerny, 1990, p. 233). State education policy processes and outcomes are understood as occurring within a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360), where the exercising of agency by individuals and groups is both constrained and enabled (Lingard, 1993, p. 41). While all sites and levels of policy development have both structural and personal dimensions, Lather (1991a, p. 29) suggests that the intersection of structure and agency, while highlighted in a non-deterministic way, is not infinitely open. Raab (1994) elaborates:

‘Human agency’ must be taken seriously in explanations of policy. But so too, must the context of action within structures and processes located in other sites, or enveloping all of them, and providing the constraints and opportunities for action. (p. 25)

At the level of policy enactment, both micro and macro factors constrain and enable (Lingard, 1993, p. 41) the exercising of agency by individuals or groups and may present as ideological, political, economic, structural or discursive factors (Vidovich, 2001). Viewing the state as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360), where policy outcomes or settlements are mediated through constraints and opportunities in ways that reflect the intersection of structure and agency, assists us to understand why the State announced a middle school at Eaton.

### ***Political constraints: Pending State Government election***

At the local level of policy enactment many of the EDWA participants identified the factors which constrained the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury. In particular, the intensity of the community opposition, in combination with a pending State Government election in early 2001, constrained the policy options available to the Government at the completion of the formal *LAEP* process in Bunbury. Thus, the State Government election, which forms part of the democratic process of governance, presented as a structural and political constraint in the context of a highly contested policy enactment process. The significance and the potential implications of the forthcoming State Government election were also expressed by a senior EDWA official who explained that “there was a fair bit of delicacy leading up to the election ... as I understand it ... Bunbury typically is a good indicator of who forms government ... Parties get really touchy about it” (Senior EDWA District Office administrator, personal communication, November 29, 2004).

Interestingly, what may present as opportunities to influence policy outcomes for some interest groups may well present as constraints for others. The political context of the pending State Government election was constructed as a major constraint for senior EDWA officials and the Minister for Education in terms of achieving a senior campus outcome through *LAEP*. However, for many of the teacher and parent representatives, this presented as an opportunity, or form of political leverage, to prevent the Government from restructuring education in a direction opposed by the local community. The significance of the election was explained to me by one of the teacher representatives when she said “I feel very, very confident that if we had not been in a marginal seat they [EDWA] would have gone in for the fight and introduced a senior campus” (Teacher representative, personal communication, December 8, 2004). A similar point was made by a parent activist who explained how the pending election was used to prevent the closure of BSHS and the introduction of a senior campus:

I was often quite intrigued why we were tolerated for so long and I think the only reason was the marginal status of this seat ... that hung over that whole process and in some ways acted positively because I think it constrained the outcome. From day one the issue in Bunbury was politicised ... parents were telling me 'I'm normally a Liberal voter, I will not vote for this Party [Liberal] if they do anything to this primary school' ... the stakes were high ... it was named in the discourse and the local Member's seat was under threat. (Parent representative, personal communication, November, 2004)

Another parent representative said that the political context in Bunbury was complex. While the Bunbury City Council legitimated community concerns about *LAEP*, the Labor candidate, who was a City Councillor and an EDWA employee, used the Council as a platform to run a high profile political campaign against the Government. The parent explained that “the person that was driving it [*LAEP*] in Council was the Labor candidate for the seat of Bunbury ... the candidate’s role became one that was very political about trying to damage the Government of the day ... it got really perverse (Parent representative, personal communication, May 3, 2004).

***Internal constraints: Resistant uncorporate staff***

One of the other major constraints encountered by EDWA Central and District Office officials was the resistance from many teachers and principals to education restructuring in Bunbury. The interior of the “reconfigured state” (Lingard, 1993, p. 41) as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360) is “multi-sited and differentiated in its interests and influence” (Gale, 1997, p. iv). As Jessop (1990, p. 367) explains, “it is not the state which acts: it is always specific sets of politicians and state officials located in specific parts of the state system.” The resistance by teachers and principals clearly illustrated the lack of coherence within the State in relation to restructuring secondary education, as well as the problems encountered between the centre and the local site of policy reception. While the State Government election and community opposition presented as major constraints and an important political context in relation to the *LAEP* policy settlement, the reference by the senior EDWA administrator to the contestation and tensions within the State also presents as an important constraint shaping the range of policy options available.

A senior EDWA Central Office official, while identifying that the State Government election presented as a major constraint, also stated that there were issues within the State Education Department, particularly at the local site of policy reception in Bunbury, that constrained the nature of the *LAEP* outcomes. He explained:

Local Area Education Planning was mainly introduced strategically because School Rationalisation had failed to deal with secondary schools at all. Secondary schools were the most industrialised, most unionised, and the toughest to handle ... what could be the hiccup in Bunbury? There was an entrenched secondary school teacher resistance. Protest, refusal to accept the change ... it's all that core issue, industrial type issues. (Senior EDWA administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004)

Hoepper (1998, p. 118) says that, as a strategic-relational terrain, the legitimization of the state to determine policy directions is produced by the maintenance of a number of discourses that constitute a legitimating “script.” However, as a strategic-relational terrain, the state is subject to “continual and complex contestation in which various agents ‘speak’ or challenge the legitimating script in complex, shifting and sometimes inconsistent and unintended ways” (p. 118). The various discourses of the script produce a pervading sense that the state is a legitimate authority serving the interests of its people. This maintains the “effects of broad structural dominance” (Kenway, 1992, p. 136) of the state. However, in relation to social agency and effects, actors within the state may generally act in ways that affirm aspects of the “legitimizing script” although this may not necessarily be “consistently or always” (Hoepper, 1998, p. 117). A senior EDWA Central Office administrator suggested that the resistance at the local site of policy reception by teachers and principals through challenging actions of State officials was a major constraint for the achievement of the Central Office policy agenda in Bunbury. Through exercising their social agency or resistance toward education restructuring, these sections of the State challenged the neo-liberal “legitimizing script” (Hoepper, 1998, p. 118) and Central and District Office authority and dominance. The lack of compliance toward Central Office agendas by many of the local EDWA staff members at the local site of policy enactment was reflected in the comments from a senior EDWA Central Office administrator who suggested that “the secondary educators in Bunbury were totally uncorporate ... the principals were totally maverick. They did what they liked, when they liked and how they liked” (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 6, 2004).

Given the extensive opposition from the local community to the introduction of middle schools and a senior campus, rather than review the relevance of centrally mandated policy goals Central Office officials held the local District Office responsible for not ensuring the compliance of staff to *speak* the neo-liberal state “legitimizing script” (Hoepper, 1998, p. 118). The EDWA Central Office policy elites produce the frameworks within which the marketisation of education will occur, while they distance themselves from the responsibility for the problems encountered at the local site of policy reception or enactment. A senior Central Office administrator, while recognising the limitations of the centre in taking on an overtly coercive authoritarian role to ensure the attainment of policy outcomes at the local level, suggested that the District Office needed to undertake

the ideological work necessary to ensure that educational change is publicly accepted in the form promoted by the centre:

If we can't convince our people that it's worth doing, then we are whistling Dixie ... we can't bulldoze people through. If you know that you've got a couple of key school people who are against an idea, then you've got to do something about it. Let there be no doubt that some of our biggest critics are our own people. (Senior EDWA Central Office administrator, personal communication, December 12, 2004)

The closing down of a local participatory policy space by State managerial policy elites to ensure that educational quality and choice remained policy concerns on the political agenda raises important policy issues. In particular, why did the State remain committed to this policy manoeuvre despite extensive local opposition, and whose interests were being served through education restructuring? These issues are explored in the following section as I address how global pressures, as well as the reconfigured state's contradictory roles produce tensions that are resolved through temporary policy settlements.

***Discursive pressures: Global education restructuring policy settlement***

One of the effects of economic globalisation throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the emergence of a policy settlement which saw a shift from the dominance of a “liberal-meritocratic settlement” to “economic reductionism” whereby “public policy objectives [are] couched in terms of economic goods” (Seddon, 1992/3, p. 8). Within this context, as Taylor et al. (1997, p. 32) identify, a “settlement” suggests that at “different historical moments, the state comes to large-scale settlements which then frame up the options in specific policy domains” while excluding other options. As previously discussed, Lingard (2000b, p. 84) identifies the emergence of a “global educational policy consensus” where a reconfigured “state form [is] geared to delivering more narrowly defined policy goals at a cheaper cost.” *LAEP*, in practice, reflects a neo-liberal market ideology and an economic rationalist agenda for structuring education provision to improve educational quality and offer consumer choice.

The nature and rationale for the policy settlement suggests that the alternative policy strategies and the reframing of the problems with the education system advanced by the local community throughout *LAEP* were negated by EDWA policy elites and the solutions were constrained by a neo-liberal economising discourse. Discourses that link the market, managerialism, quality and choice in education had become hegemonic at the



State level in education policy making to the extent that they were regularised into organisational managerial thinking. As discourses, they imposed non-negotiable meanings (Ranson, 1996) whereby macro-policy producers exercised their agency particularly in relation to the production of a policy settlement in *LAEP* in a way that constrained other policy options and alternative voices at the local level.

***Internal pressures: Accumulation/legitimation***

The contemporary problems in education that liberal democratic states seek to address through policy reflect global pressures to restructure public education and to manage the tensions associated with fulfilling its contradictory roles of accumulation/legitimation (Dale, 2000; Lingard, 1996; Taylor et al., 1997; Whitty et al., 1998). In other words, at the same time as dealing with external pressures, the restructured state also attempts to deal with internal issues which relate to the contradictory functions of maintaining the conditions for local capital accumulation as well as the legitimation of its actions (Lingard, 1996). Understanding how the state manages these competing roles in the policy process, and the associated political struggles, goes some way towards explaining the nature of the *LAEP* policy settlement. In relation to accumulation issues, the *LAEP* policy document draws on “economizing” (Ozga, 2000b, p. 24) discourses to justify education change on the basis that it will bring with it more efficient and effective use of resources. Part of this economising discourse was the State’s concern to manage local accumulation issues particularly in an economic rationalist environment where the Western Australian Department of Treasury was scrutinising budgetary expenditure and required the Education Department, which was over \$20 million in debt, to reduce expenditure (A. Burns, 1998, May 29, p. 10). Options suggested in the *LAEP Framework* (EDWA, 1997a) were to close and or amalgamate schools to rationalise resources. Some of these outcomes had been achieved in other educational districts undertaking *LAEP* (Boland et al., 2001; Moroz, 2003). The introduction of a senior campus in areas where school closures and amalgamations had occurred was promoted as a way of improving educational quality and choice as well as an economising strategy to reduce spending in the Education portfolio in the long term.

Within the State of Western Australia throughout the mid-1980s, neo-liberal pressures on education policy were evident in a series of education policy documents which challenged the provision and purpose of public education (see Chapter Five). A key assumption underpinning neo-liberal discourses is that the state needs to promote

education policies that create an environment that facilitates a human capital view of education to enhance a nation's competitiveness in the international capitalist market-place (Blackmore, 1993; Reid, 1998; Smyth et al., 2000; Strange, 1992; Thomson, 1998). *LAEP* was one of the vehicles through which the State sought to restructure education to achieve a shift in the purpose of public education at minimum cost and to provide conditions for ongoing capital accumulation in a globally competitive market-place.

It is far from straightforward for governments to address accumulation/legitimation issues and the associated tensions through policies such as *LAEP*. Bonal (2003, p. 165) suggests that "the symbolic production of state discourses underlying innovative policies", such as *LAEP*, "becomes a crucial aspect in understanding the new management of legitimation problems" within a neo-liberal policy environment. Consistent with this view S. Robertson and Dale (2002, p. 463) suggest that, within education, there has been a "fusing" of legitimation with accumulation where the state promotes an image that it is using resources effectively and efficiently while at the same time providing a quality product. Hence the interests of individual consumers are promoted as being served through increasing the range and scope of market-based strategies. In relation to *LAEP*, the fusing of legitimation/accumulation issues was challenged by community activists who drew on a communitarian discourse to contest the economising discourses driving education restructuring at the local level. The enactment of *LAEP* demonstrates that, while neo-liberal global discourses constrain the options available for education restructuring, there are context specific differences at the local site of policy enactment where global education restructuring discourses adopted by the state are mediated and contested.

The "reconfigured state" (Lingard, 1993, p. 41) finds itself engaged in "cautious crisis management" (C. Offe cited in Head & Bell, 1994, p. 51) at the local level when managing the contradictory roles of legitimation/accumulation, as well as the managerial tensions that emerge between centre and periphery relations. While there are glimpses at the local level of the authoritarian coercive state in relation to the dealings with community representatives and local EDWA employees, the *LAEP* policy settlement suggests that the reconfigured state is still concerned with addressing the tensions associated with accumulation/legitimation issues. However, while local contexts are important sites of resistance to neo-liberal global discourses, the State's policy settlement

in relation to *LAEP* reflects elements of the neo-liberal global education policy settlement as well as attending to legitimization concerns. In particular, when the Minister for Education announced the introduction of the middle school at Eaton, he assured the community that the Government had heard the community's concerns about education restructuring and had, therefore, retained the "status quo" in Bunbury (Minister for Education, 2000). At the same time as publicly addressing legitimization issues, this "temporary settlement[s]" (Kenway, 1990, p. 59) left the option open for the State to restructure public education in accordance with a neo-liberal economic market orientated approach.

## SUMMARY

This chapter explored the micro-political processes associated with the highly contested agenda-building activities of stakeholder groups across different levels of the policy trajectory throughout the enactment of *LAEP*. In particular, ten focusing events were described and analysed to illuminate the tactics and political manoeuvres drawn on by community representatives to contest and resist the EDWA policy elite's imposition of school closures and the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools in Bunbury. Of significance was the way parent and teacher representatives and a coalescing group of interests at the local level exercised their social agency to ultimately reject *LAEP* as an "invited" (Gaventa, 2006, p. 26) policy space and to create alternative participatory spaces from which to contest *LAEP*. From these alternative participatory spaces strategies of resistance or acts of "authorship" (B. Davies, 1991, p. 50) at the micro level of the policy trajectory included publicly deconstructing and challenging hegemonic education restructuring discourses, developing and circulating counter-hegemonic discourses and challenging the "ideology of expertism" (I. Young, 1990, p. 80) progressed by EDWA policy elites.

Rather than accept a passive and compliant positioning within the managerialist discourse, many parent representatives took up more active subject positions that enabled them to exercise power through claiming planning expertise and professional status at the local level. Through deploying their cultural and social capital to question the professional knowledge and competence of the EDWA District Office officials, they re-defined the *LAEP* process as flawed and undemocratic in a way that their concerns were legitimated on the public, media and political agendas by wider interests. This

strategy challenged the unequal power relations between community representatives and central and District Office officials and constrained EDWA officials from enacting central policy agendas for restructuring public education in Bunbury. The notion, therefore, that people hold social, symbolic and cultural capital in several forms is valuable for understanding how people take up different subjectivities in a way that enables the exercise of effective social agency and expression of voice in the public arena. Furthermore, the ability to politicise issues by privileging certain discourses and problem definitions was an important component of the exercise of power (Lukes, 1974), which ultimately lead to a series of compromises or a temporary policy settlement by the State Government in relation to the *LAEP* outcomes.

While this chapter illustrated that the State policy actors were not all powerful in implementing neo-liberal educational change throughout the *LAEP* policy enactment process, the outcome or policy settlement raises questions about the balance between the power and control of the State to devise and implement policy and the extent to which the macro policies discourses can be recreated or, in effect, subverted at the micro level. The *LAEP* policy settlement also highlights the importance of relating global and national policy contexts to the smaller pictures of policies and practices within local communities. Despite compromises on the part of the State in relation to the introduction of a senior campus and school closures, the *LAEP* policy settlement does reflect the effect of a globalised policy discourse concerning neo-liberal education policy reform and its local political mediation, or its vernacular manifestation, within the Bunbury educational site. Hence, “centre-periphery relations” (Ball, 1990, p. 20) characteristic of the “reconfigured state” (Lingard, 1993, p. 41), enabled the State to “steer[ing] at a distance” (Kickert, 1995, p. 135) to produce a policy settlement that addressed issues of accumulation/legitimation and to retain a neo-liberal market ideology and an economic rationalist agenda for future education restructuring in Bunbury. The EDWA Central Office policy elites ultimately refocused central control and exercised considerable power relative to other policy actors to leave the options open to position local education provision to compete in the global market-place. A reason for this, as Kenway (1990) suggests, is that, by establishing the strategies and parameters for determining the nature of policy settlements, the state can exercise significant influence, particularly when the terrain on which struggles over education restructuring take place is already “infused with ideologies and structured by power” (Corbitt, 1997, p. 172).

## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **LINKING POLICY, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This study set out to explore how participants understood, experienced and responded to the enactment of *LAEP* from 1998-2000 in Bunbury, Western Australia. Informed by critical social theory, a critical qualitative ethnographic methodology and a multi-level CPTF were applied to dig beneath surface appearances and interrupt commonsense understandings of the enactment of *LAEP*. In this final chapter I want to initially present the key conclusions from the study and discuss some of the emerging theoretical issues. I also briefly discuss a very recent development in education restructuring in Western Australia and Bunbury in particular that needs to be understood as a part of the *LAEP* policy trajectory and the progression of the State's neo-liberal education reform agenda. Following on from this, I draw together a number of ideas and lessons that emerge from this research at the level of policy, research and practice to inform an evolving critically engaged approach to policy analysis.

#### **LOOKING BACK: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

A central idea advanced in this study was that policy processes and outcomes need to be understood through three interrelated levels of policy analysis. The following conclusions as they relate to the interaction of the macro structural (global, nation-state, state) level; middle-range institutional level of agenda-building and the micro, personal lived and group experience level of *LAEP* include:

- The *LAEP* policy documents reflect the macro level discursive constraints associated with neo-liberal global economising discourses that successive National Australian and Western Australian governments have drawn on to inform education policy since the 1980s.
- Throughout *LAEP*, the macro level economising discourses became evident not in isolation from policy enactment in Bunbury, but in relation to it. The enduring tensions and debates at the level of practice were a manifestation of the uncomfortable coexistence of the state's adoption of travelling neo-liberal

economising school reform discourses and contradictory devolution and community participation discourses.

- While the participants' experiences of the enactment of *LAEP* revealed a highly complex, fractured and conflictual process, *LAEP* confirms the importance of micro-political processes and the social agency of policy actors in local sites in responding to, and mediating globalising pressures and travelling education reform discourses.
- Despite *LAEP* featuring the rhetoric of devolution and democratic community participation, there was evidence of attempts by EDWA policy elites who were removed from the local context to manipulate or engineer consent for pre-determined decisions about school closures, middle schools and a senior campus.
- *LAEP* confirms G. Anderson's (1998, p. 574) view that the term participation is a "*floating signifier*" that can be appropriated by different groups to advance their interests. The EDWA policy elites drew on managerial and market participatory discourses as they sought to control the *LAEP* process; and community representatives drew on a social democratic view, as they sought to claim their right to exercise effective social agency and voice in educational decision-making.
- The technocratic planning process and the managerialist participatory discourses and practices had the effect of marginalising the participation of students and Indigenous, low-socio-economic and disabled interest groups, despite the claim that the aim of *LAEP* was to provide a quality education for all students.
- *LAEP* revealed the dominance of middle class parent participation, which emerged from the interaction in a "political field" (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 379-465) of professional parent and corporate managerialist discourses, EDWA's structuring of political opportunity structures for participation, and the linguistic, social and cultural capital possessed by parent participants.
- A great paradox in *LAEP* is that, while policy makers created an opportunity for community participation that was biased towards middle-class professional parents, the EDWA policy elites sought to exercise power and retain dominance through an "ideology of expertism" (I. Young, 1990, p. 80), which constructed parents as amateurs and unrepresentative of real or average parents.

- *LAEP* illustrated that the interlinkages between the micro, middle-range and macro levels of the CPTF policy process are two-way. Community participants created alternative participatory spaces and developed counter-hegemonic and reverse accountability discourses to redefine *LAEP* as a problem on the public, media and political agendas that led to a series of “temporary settlements” (Kenway, 1990, p. 59) by the state in relation to education restructuring in Bunbury.
- The study illustrated that while there were points of leverage for social activism throughout *LAEP*, the centralisation tendencies of the neo-liberal state were ultimately stronger than decentralisation tendencies as Central Office policy elites steered at a distance (Kickert, 1995, p. 135) to ultimately close down the participatory space.
- The *LAEP* policy settlement of the retention of the existing senior high schools and the introduction of a middle school suggests a view of the state as a “strategic-relational” terrain (Jessop, 1990, p. 360), where the state’s legitimacy/accumulation concerns and the longer-term interests of pursuing a neo-liberal economising education restructuring agenda were mediated through a range of constraining and enabling factors.

Reflective of the key theoretical debates in the education policy analysis literature, this study also raises questions about the nature and role of the state in policy, how to understand and interpret power in policy processes and the relationship between micro level policy analysis at the local level versus larger scale theorising at the macro level. This study of policy enactment suggests that the conceptualisation of the state and understanding the nature of power relations in policy process may be more complex than polarised views of the state as represented in a state control (Dale, 1989, 1992) or a policy cycle (Ball, 1994a; Bowe et al., 1992) approach which were referred to in Chapter Two. Throughout *LAEP* there was no evidence that state power was homogeneous or totalising in effect or that the re-contextualisation of the policy by the community produced ongoing subjugation of the power of state policy elites. Rather, power and its importance throughout the policy enactment process suggested episodic fluctuations in the relative power of the state and local interests groups. Despite the importance of micro-political processes and social activism at the local level and the episodic and non-deterministic nature of state influence throughout the policy enactment process, the state ultimately

exercised authority to establish a temporary policy settlement. The nature of the *LAEP* policy settlement suggests a “state-centred” (Vidovich, 1999a, p. 2) approach, to the extent that the policy elites exercised power to produce a policy outcome that reflected the broad dominance and interests of the state. However, as Gale (1999, p. 403) suggests, state power is not totalising because policy settlements are “asymmetrical, temporary and context-dependent” and open to further challenges across the policy trajectory.

This study of policy enactment highlights the significance of addressing how the state arrives at a particular policy settlement and whose interests are represented. Further theorising around the notion of policy settlements offers the potential to elaborate issues of state power, how interest groups may influence/interrupt policy settlements within the context of micro/middle-range/macro level enabling and constraining factors, and the nature of the shifting relationship between micro level agency and macro constraints over time.

This research affirms the value of a critical ethnographic methodological approach to access and understand the lived experience of participation in education reform processes, particularly where the state’s participatory rhetoric and participants’ actual experience of their participation is contradictory. The experience of and the analysis of the ethnographic interviews also raises significant issues about the state’s silence in relation to the complexity and dilemmas associated with the ethical issues when the state invites community participation in policy reform processes. In direct contrast to the State’s portrayal of *LAEP* as a technocratic process, which suggests that it is possible to view the world in “detached, uncontaminated, neutral and value-free ways” (Smyth, Angus, Down, & McInerney, 2006, p. 130), many parent and school representatives identified that the lived experience of their participation had negative and long-term effects on their lives. Some participants identified levels of extreme stress, unresolved emotions, professional damage and in some cases, the perceived necessity to move their children to another school because of their involvement in *LAEP*. While most community participants considered that they were able to exercise their agency to influence certain aspects of the *LAEP* policy settlement, such as the prevention of school closures and the introduction of a senior campus in the 1998-2000 process, they also retained a residual negativity and anger about their involvement, and an ongoing questioning of how to influence participatory policy processes initiated by the state.



The announcement by the Labor Government some years after the 1998-2000 *LAEP* process that a senior campus would be built in Bunbury left many participants feeling a further sense of betrayal by DET and an impoverished view of how to contest the dominance of the prevailing neo-liberal paradigm of school quality and improvement. These concerns were particularly prevalent in an environment where the state seeks to order policy spaces to minimise opportunities for authentic community participation. As discussed in Chapter One, DET reactivated the *LAEP* process in 2003 and on the advice of the DET Senior Executive community representatives were excluded from the drafting of the Options for presentation to the Minister for Education. The rationale for this decision was that “corporate memory” identified the project [*LAEP* 1998-2000] as “high risk”, and therefore “the risk of consulting the community at the early stage was considered greater than the outrage likely to occur if the Minister put the options directly to the community at a later stage” (EDWA Administrator, 2004, p. 15). Manea Senior College which is on a site co-located with TAFE and ECU opened in 2009. While Manea Senior College can accommodate 600 Year 11 and 12 students there are currently only 150 Year 11 students enrolled (Manea Senior College, 2009).

During the week in which I was finalising this thesis there was an interesting joint announcement by the Liberal Premier, Colin Barnett (2008-present) and the Minister for Education, Liz Constable (2008-present) that out of 103 applications, 34 public schools across the State had been chosen to become Independent Public Schools (hereafter IPS) (Banks, 2009, September 24, p. 6). Manea Senior College was identified as one of the schools in Western Australia that at the commencement of the 2010 school year will become an IPS. This policy manoeuvre and the process for determining whether local schools in Bunbury would apply to become an IPS needs to be contextualised in relation to the *LAEP* policy trajectory from 1998 onwards in Bunbury and the State’s ongoing enactment of a neo-Liberal education reform agenda.

The Premier identified the introduction of IPS in Western Australia as “one of the most significant changes to the State’s education system in many decades” and the fulfilment of the Liberal Government’s pre-election policy of *Empowering Local Communities* (Cann, 2009, August 12, p. 1). The very notion of IPS and the process used by DET to arrive at whether a school would be selected to become an IPS attracted considerable opposition for the SSTUWA (Bradbury, 2009, August 12, p. 1) and WACSSO (Australian Broadcasting Commission, 2009, September 8, p. 1). The SSTUWA identified the IPS

policy as reflective of neo-liberal ideology driven by choice, competition, performance issues and outcomes and multi-sectorial partnerships (SSTUWA, 2009, October 12, p. 2). All of these policy issues were identified by EDWA as problems to be addressed through the 1998-2000 Bunbury *LAEP* process which would be solved through restructuring public education in Bunbury through school closures, and the introduction of a senior campus and middle schools (see Chapter Seven and Eight).

Despite the Minister for Education's assurances that there would be comprehensive consultation with school communities regarding the introduction of IPS, the SSTUWA identified the four week period in which schools were to submit an application to become an IPS as "making a farce of the notion of community consultation" and "countering the capacity for genuine consultation and transparency" (SSTUWA, 2009, August 17, p. 1). While the *LAEP* policy prescribed a process for community participation, the responsibility for determining whether a local community supported their school submitting an application to become an IPS was the responsibility of the Principal. The community consultation process used at Manea Senior College is detailed in the August 2009, College newsletter:

I [the Principal] have examined at length the independent public schools concept with other principals, staff and the College Board and believe that there are significant advantages to Manea Senior College being involved. There will only be benefits to our students from becoming an independent public school. With student achievement and outcomes as the driving force, and in accordance with the decision of the College Board, Manea Senior College will be applying for independent school status .... If you have any comments or would like to endorse the IPS application for Manea Senior College please email me. (Principal Manea Senior College, 2009a, p. 1)

In the September Manea Senior College newsletter, the Principal announced that the College will become an IPS in the first school term of 2010 (Principal Manea Senior College, 2009b, p. 1)

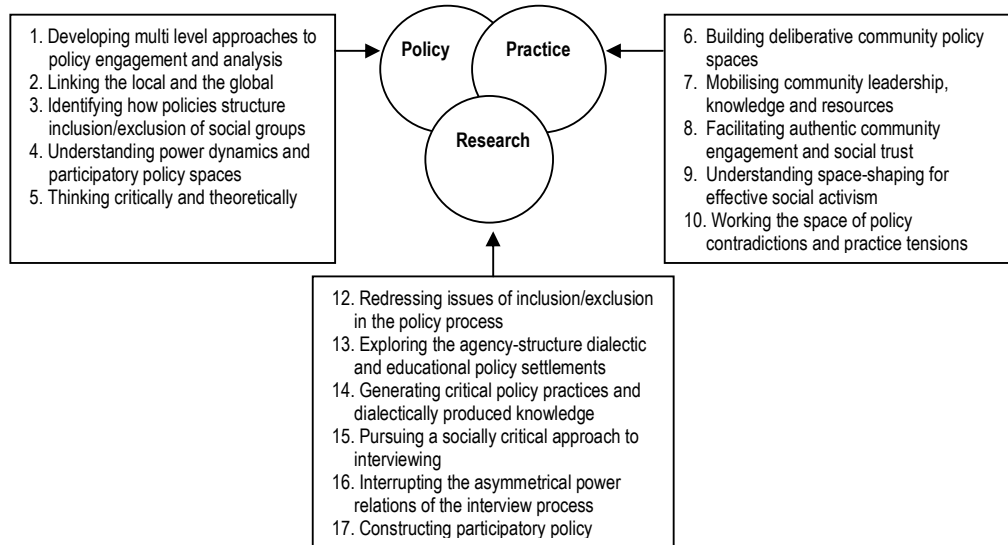
While this study of the 1998-2000 study of *LAEP* affirms the importance of the "multiple faces of agency" (Rodriguez cited in Smyth, Angus, Down, & McInerney, 2009, p. 130) and the impact of sophisticated, creative and courageous forms of social activism, it also highlights the highly problematic and profound contradictions of community participation in Liberal democracies where the state's preferred outcomes are driven by neo-liberal policy agendas. Furthermore, the policy manoeuvres of the introduction of a

senior college in Bunbury and the announcement that Manea Senior College would become an IPS also highlight how the neo-liberal state orders the policy environment through the “paradoxical relationship of simultaneous empowerment and manipulation” (Hodgson, 2001, p. 120) which creates policy and practice contradictions and tensions that surface in local contexts. Given this way of ordering the policy space and the potential for the highly conflictual relationship between the state and the community, there is considerable work to be done to place the issue of conducting ethical and inclusive participatory policy processes on the bureaucratic and political agendas. From the outset, conducting ethical participatory policy process requires that the state policy actors and community participants have access to participatory frameworks/approaches. These frameworks need to emphasise the building of trust between participants, how to address inequitable power relations, the importance of exposing agendas and constraints, how to facilitate inclusive rather than exclusive and manipulative forms of participation and above all, the acknowledgement that participatory policy processes are messy and contested and may not produce policy outcomes that reflect the state’s interests. It is with these issues in mind that I now want to move on to draw together some ideas from this study that link policy, research and practice to create more authentic, collaborative and ethical participatory processes as well as holding the tension of finding effective ways to intervene in inequitable policy processes.

## **LOOKING FORWARD: CRITICALLY ENGAGED POLICY**

Through the application of the CPTF framework, this critical ethnographic policy study contributes to our understanding of the “how” “why”, “what” (Kenway, 1990, p. 24) and the “why now” (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 39) questions about policy formulation and enactment. While we need to understand the factors influencing policy, it is also necessary to engage with policy to develop ideas and ways to actively influence its production and enactment. As Gale (2006, p. 3) contends, it is time to move beyond policy analysis which asks “what is going on?” and “how come?”, to include, “what can be done about it.” In other words, we need to draw on the insights that our policy analysis framework and ethnographic studies offer, to develop a critically engaged approach to policy that addresses “the contexts where knowledge, practice and identity are shaped” (Luke cited in Gale, 2006, p. 8) so that we effectively engage with policy construction and enactment. In the spirit of optimistic critical inquiry, I now want to synthesise some key

ideas, insights and lessons emerging from this research and offer some way forward for approaching policy engagement that is critical and political in the areas of policy, research and practice. The following heuristic as illustrated in Figure 2. details my evolving understanding of the components that constitute a critically engaged policy perspective.



**Figure 2: A Critically Engaged Policy Perspective**

### **Critically Engaged Policy**

The community participants’ authoring of their own counter-hegemonic accounts of *LAEP* clearly challenged the State’s construction of *LAEP* as a technocratic value-free approach to education restructuring, and the unproblematic demarcation between policy formulation and implementation. However, as Ife (1997, p. 20) observes, the rational modernist view or technocratic approach to policy is so entrenched in western thought that the associated practices are rarely challenged in the “world of policy and management,” despite ongoing theoretical critiques. As indicated in Figure 2, I identify five key elements of a critically engaged approach to policy analysis, which offer a means to counter “managerialist, technicist and uncritical” (Taylor, 1997, p. 23) views of policy.

### **1. *Developing interpretive multi-level approaches to policy engagement and analysis***

To counter linear views of the policy process, critically engaged policy adopts a multi-level or multi-layered approach to policy analysis and engagement. Policy formulation and enactment are not confined to a single site, and the contestation and modification of policy can occur at various points across the policy trajectory. While all sites and levels of the policy process have *both* structural and personal dimensions, the context of action must be located within an understanding of how power works discursively, and how the structures and processes across the various sites of the policy trajectory constrain and enable human action (Raab, 1994). Multi-level approaches to policy engagement and analysis offer the potential for critical policy research to move beyond critique and to enhance our understanding of why policy and practice take particular forms and to theorise where the effective “space[s] for challenge” (Bacchi, 2000, p. 55) are throughout the policy process.

### **2. *Linking the local and the global***

A critically engaged approach to policy analysis traces policy discourses from global contexts (macro level), through national level policies to policy [re]construction and practices at the micro level of practice. The emphasis is on understanding the dynamic interactions between macro constraint and micro agency, and how these tensions manifest within particular local policy sites. The significance of a policy framework which highlights the “dialectic between the global and the local” (Vidovich, 2004, p. 342) is that it challenges a totalising view of globalisation and most importantly, it emphasises opportunities “for critical and active policy *learning* rather than uncritical and passive policy *borrowing*” (Vidovich, 2006, p. 8).

### **3. *Identifying how policies structure the inclusion/exclusion of social groups***

Critically engaged policy recognises that managerialist top-down representative participatory processes do not facilitate discursive and social practice that are inclusive of diverse groups and voices in the policy process (Barnes, Knops et al., 2004). This critical perspective problematises the notion of community representativeness in participatory policy processes and questions who participates, who is repeatedly excluded and who excludes themselves. How the political field authorises and endorses people with certain social and demographic characteristics

while other groups are not legitimated as representatives in participatory processes is exposed. Critical engagement with policy construction and enactment places the issue of inclusion/exclusion in participatory processes on the political agenda and seeks creative and innovative ways to redress the structural factors, discourses and practices which inhibit the inclusion of marginalised voices.

#### ***4. Understanding power dynamics and participatory policy spaces***

Critically engaged policy views community participation as a situated practice which occurs within the context of “policy spaces” (Cornwall, 2002b, p. 8), which are permeated with power relations and bounded by discourses. Power analysis is critical to understanding the extent to which new spaces for participatory governance can be used for transformative engagement, or whether they are more likely to be instruments for re-enforcing domination and control. Only through addressing issues of power in relation to participatory policy spaces can the broader agenda of participatory democracy be realised as well as ways for the transformative possibilities for citizen engagement and action enlarged (Gaventa, 2005, p. 2).

#### ***5. Thinking critically and theoretically***

The reflexive application of social theory for understanding multi-level policy processes is a key feature of critically engaged policy. With increasing attention on the “agency-structure” dialectic” in educational policy formation and enactment (Fay cited Thomson & Wellard, 1999, p. 6), theoretical eclecticism offers greater insights into policy processes and effects (Ball, 1993, p. 11). Drawing on Ball’s (1994a, p. 14) metaphor of a “toolbox”, this requires “finding appropriate theory and concepts for the task at hand, rather than narrowly applying a particular theory which may close off possibilities for interpretation” and theoretical development (Taylor et al., 1997, pp. 38-39). This view resonates with Kincheloe and McLaren’s (2005, p. 306) notion of “evolving critically”, which emphasises finding new and “interconnected ways of understanding power and oppression” and “new ways to irritate dominant forms of power” at the various levels of the policy trajectory.

## **Critically Engaged Policy Practice**

Critically engaged policy is concerned with broadening our understanding of policy practice. This approach is relevant to policy actors who formulate policy, who may be in a position to modify policy in their day-to-day practice and stakeholders who are affected by policy decisions and have an interest in pressing for change. Critical and reflective knowledge generation about policy practices is crucial to enabling citizens to analyse and articulate their concerns, which may lie beyond the frames of reference of pervasive policy discourses. The following ideas provide a way forward for policy actors seeking to develop a critically engaged approach to policy practice.

### **6. *Building deliberative community policy spaces***

Critically engaged policy seeks to build deliberative and dialogical policy processes to address complex issues such as, how to include rather than exclude groups, build relational trust, facilitate social agency and voice and openly deal with issues of power, competing interests, values, and conflict (Lewis & Naidoo, 2004). For policy spaces to be “internally inclusive” (I. Young, 2000, p. 57) participants should not be silenced or constrained by being required to speak only within the tradition of a particular institution. Alternative knowledge and speaking traditions such as, story telling and lived experiences are promoted as a legitimate basis for contributions alongside technical expertise (Sullivan, Knops, Barnes, & Newman, 2004, p. 248). To build deliberative policy spaces, Goetz and Gaventa (2001, p. 12) promote the need for educational bureaucracies to develop “greater transparency, changed staff attitudes, and the introduction or reinforcement of a service culture”. Most importantly, building these spaces means the adoption of a relational view of power where “power to rather than power over” is the dominant culture (Jones & Ross cited in Smyth, 2009, p. 14).

### **7. *Mobilising community leadership, knowledge and resources***

Critically engaged policy practice recognises “mobilizing citizens as knowledgeable actors engaged in a dynamic networked politics” across local sites (Leach & Scoones, 2007, p. 3). The mobilisation of community leadership is an integral part of building the social, cultural and linguistic capacity of communities to facilitate their participation in deliberative policy spaces and to enable local solutions to local problems. A key role for community leaders is to help build trust through forming

coalitions and alliances between disparate groups so that they can act collectively to influence educational change (Smyth, 2009). Promoting ways for community leaders to name hidden and overt expressions of power dynamics and to map the way they affect participatory processes are the first steps toward confronting inequitable power relations in participatory policy spaces.

#### **8. *Facilitating authentic community engagement and a culture of social trust***

Critically engaged policy advocates participatory discourses which construct the identities of parents and community members as active and engaged citizens in educational policy development and enactment rather than passive consumers of neo-liberal inspired educational services. The emphasis is on the promotion of discourses and social practices that actively construct and engage community members as a rich and a valid resource of knowledge about their community, irrespective of their class, race, gender disability and/or ethnicity (Gale & Densmore, 2003). This socially critical perspective also encourages community members, researchers, practitioners and policy actors to work together in a collaborative and productive partnership. From this perspective, the importance of local expertise and knowledge is drawn on to understand the complexity of how local circumstances are being shaped globally, systemically and institutionally. Essential to this approach is the facilitation of accountable relationships that are based on “trust ... established through ... mutual agreement about ... obligations to one another” (Gold, Simon & Brown cited in Smyth, 2009, p. 18). In short, social trust is a feature of the participatory culture.

#### **9. *Understanding the lived experiences of space-shaping for effective social activism***

The lived experience of participatory space-making and shaping draws attention to how spaces for participation are “occupied, negotiated, subverted or mediated” by interest groups and how the exercise of power, agency and knowledge combine to shape education policies (Cornwall, 2002a, p. 51). How silenced or marginalised groups begin to exercise their social agency through “creating new spaces, occupying existing spaces, or revalorising negatively labelled spaces” (Price-Chalita, 1994, p. 239) is important for understanding the transformational possibilities for participatory educational reform processes and policies. Through understanding participation as a spatial practice, policy actors and activists identify the “productive possibilities of



power as well as negative effects, to the ways in which the production of space in itself creates - as well as circumscribes – the possibilities for exercising effective social agency” (Cornwall, 2002b, p. 8).

#### ***10. Working the space of policy contradictions and practice tensions***

Policy discourses are never absolute or fixed and therefore remain in an ongoing state of change as they interact and intersect in policy spaces. Broadly identifying the dominant discourses shaping policy spaces and the associated policy contradictions and practice tensions can present opportunities for critique and strategic intervention. Understanding how policy discourses circulate through discursive spaces enables community groups to position themselves in relation to the practice tensions and to challenge the powerful effects of contradictory discourses. The more local people join together to analyse and develop an understanding of the emerging policy spaces, and specifically how they operate locally, the possibilities open up for local groups to develop strategic actions that can address these contradictions and effects. Such “grounded analyses” can facilitate “local people engaging in informed *activism* with respect to how they can work *within* and *on* these spaces” to produce relevant and equitable education policies and outcomes (Keevers, Treleaven, & Sykes, 2008, p. 473).

#### ***11. Demonstrating how policy problems are resisted and [re]constructed in practice***

Critically engaged policy seeks to identify points of intervention throughout policy processes to facilitate the visibility of socially just problem definitions and policy settlements. As Knights and McCabe (2000, pp. 427-428) put it, “power is rarely so exhaustively and totalizing as to preclude space for resistance and almost never so coherent as to render resistance unnecessary or ineffective.” In other words, “resistance can occur at any point in a series of power-knowledge relations” (Knights & McCabe, 2000, p. 427). Critically engaged policy emphasises exercising power to destabilise “authoritative” discourse[s]” (Apple, 1996b, p. 131) and to find ways to interrupt and reframe the discourses within which policy problems and solutions are created and acted upon. This requires highlighting the complexity and contradictions that are inevitably a feature of the policy process and the non-innocence of policy problem construction through drawing on counter hegemonic discourses to reconstruct policy issues. As Vidovich (2006, p. 8 referring to Angus) says, the

“agency” of actors at the micro level is “more than simply resisting hegemonic discourses ... it also involves actively engaging with them, and potentially transforming them.”

### **Critically Engaged Policy Research**

Critical policy research seeks to counter “a re-emergent scientism with its positivist and ... evidence-based epistemology and objectivity” (Smyth et al., 2009, p. 138) that accompanies neo-liberal ideology. A critically engaged research agenda holds the tension between complexity and uncertainty to promote a more political, active and engaged research approach. This perspective affirms the power of social activism and reclaims the value of human agency to resist the dominance of neo-liberal school reform and managerialist policy processes. One aim is to advance our knowledge and articulate tactics to interrupt inequitable and conservative education policies and processes. The following ideas contribute to the development of a critically engaged policy research agenda.

#### ***12. Redressing issues of inclusion/exclusion in the policy process***

Research which has a socially critical agenda seeks to develop ways of researching, theorising and challenging the discourses and practice associated with the inclusions/exclusion in participatory policy processes. Descriptions of the experience of inclusion and exclusion in participatory policy processes, how power is exercised to facilitate the social agency of certain groups while other groups and actors are prevented from asserting their right to participate, form part of the research agenda (Gaventa, 2005, 2006). This research agenda also addresses who and how participatory discourses circulating in policy spaces construct the legitimacy of certain groups of representatives and the nature of the power imbalance between those who participate and those who define what constitutes legitimate representativeness. This approach identifies the patterns and factors contributing to the experience of inclusion/exclusion in participatory policy processes so that the theorising of strategies to redress structural and discursive forms of exclusion can be developed.

### ***13. Exploring the agency-structure dialectic and educational policy settlements***

Critically engaged policy recognises the complexity of the agency-structure dialectic, in educational policy formulation and enactment. There is a need for ongoing activist policy research “to engage with a theory of practice that enables the interplay between agency and structure to be described and explained” (Gunter, 2002, p. 9). This means continuing to find ways to investigate the linkages between lived experiences and choices made throughout the policy process and the “institutional and social factors, that structure and shape those choices” (p. 9). This type of evolving activist research seeks ways to engage with the interplay between agency and structure, so that practice as expressed through the formulation of educational policy settlements can be explained in relation to the power dimensions from the local to global levels. Through the application of this kind of research and analysis, the potential to theorise possibilities for transformative action in participatory policy and the possibilities for citizen action to influence policy agendas and settlements can be advanced (Gaventa, 2005).

### ***14. Generating critical policy practices from dialectically produced knowledge***

Critically engaged policy calls for sophisticated research approaches that can generate theoretical and practice knowledge in “exceptionally challenging contexts” (Smyth et al., 2006, p. 121). It is against the dominance of neo-liberal and managerialist education restructuring discourses that critically engaged policy “reiterates the value of ethnography itself as a political act” (Frankham, 2006, p. 242), and the value of dialectically produced knowledge to break “the mold of linear ways of thinking and acting” (Smyth, 2001, p. 161). As evolving critical researchers, we need to be prepared to live with the tensions and unpredictability associated with the appearance of contradictions and inconsistencies throughout the data analysis process to produce practice knowledge which contributes to an alternative project of social justice.

### ***15. Pursuing a socially critical approach to interviewing***

Critically engaged policy repositions ethnographic interviews as critical conversations in which the researcher as a policy activist adopts an “unapologetic political agenda” by “speaking the unpleasant” to reveal issues of oppression, domination inequality and marginalising practices in policy processes (Smyth,

Angus, Down, & McInerney, 2008, p. 27). At the same time that this approach promotes the adoption of a socially critical perspective, an ethical and reflexive posture is also essential to facilitate the reasoning behind the perceptions and assumptions expressed by policy actors in the interview space. Key areas for exploration and reflection include, deconstructing commonsense explanations of events, asking how inequality and disadvantage are maintained through certain practices, questioning who benefits from particular policy processes and settlements and challenging “othering” processes and discourses (Smyth et al., 2008, p. 37). Through finding spaces to explore these issues, the interview process potentially serves as a form of critical intervention (Luke, 1996) where social actors gain knowledge “to understand their own position and the likely consequences of particular courses of action” (Willis & Trondman, 2000, p. 11).

#### ***16. Interrupting the asymmetrical power relations of the interview process***

Critically engaged policy research applies a poststructural understanding of power to interrupt the “powerful/powerless” (K. Smith, 2006, p. 648) dichotomy of the research relationship when researching policy elites. Rather than conceptualise the research relationship between elites and researchers as a one dimensional hierarchy, a socially critical approach proposes that power is, “only ever mediated as a relational effect of social interaction” (Allen, 2003, p. 8). The notion of policy elites as power holders is replaced by a more flexible interpretation, which defines elites as individuals who appear to routinely exercise power, “without significant challenge to the legitimacy of their authority” (M. Woods, 1998, p. 2106). The application of critical and reflexive methods direct attention toward the way in which policy elites and researchers negotiate status and power, the complexity of agency and subject positions and the ability of the researcher to intervene in the power dynamic of the interview (Conti & O’Neil, 2007). Within this context, reflexivity or “reflection in action” (Schon, 1983, p. 61) is a powerful tool for re-considering the power relations and the shifting dynamics of positionality throughout the interview process. Through researchers seeking to understand both the complex subjectivities and social locations of themselves and policy elites, there exists the potential to interrupt asymmetrical power relations through the deployment of socially legitimate knowledge and the strategic political identity management throughout the interview process. This

understanding, in turn, must underpin the representations of interviewees and knowledge claims in the documentation of the research (Conti & O'Neil, 2007).

### ***17. Constructing participatory policy processes as an ethical research practice***

A critically engaged policy perspective constructs participatory policy processes as a form of social research that requires attention to ethical issues and dilemmas. At the heart of the concern with ethical issues is the notion of creating circumstances in which to promote “relational ethics” (Flinders, 1992, p. 101) through “critical-democratic-engagement” (Smyth et al., 2008, p. 6). It is through these processes that ethical practices associated with informed consent, inequitable power relationships, transparency around educational agendas and a commitment to non-maleficence are viewed as part of an ongoing conversation and the mutual responsibility of educational bureaucrats and community participants.

As this thesis comes to a close one important lesson to emerge is the necessity to openly acknowledge that public participation is a messy and contradictory process replete with power struggles. Furthermore, there is no set formula or blueprint on offer to *get it right*. Rather, policy engagement needs to be viewed as a constructive act where despite the many tensions highlighted throughout this study, there remains a sense of optimism and numerous possibilities about different ways of thinking about and doing policy differently. Moreover, we need to bring a critical sensibility when engaging in policy analysis and a commitment to reflexivity, justice, fairness and an appreciation of the importance of working with, rather than against diverse points of view about education reform. My hope is that this study has not only told a good tale but, despite the ever present struggle against domination and inequality, it has reinforced that we have a right to participate in the construction of meanings that affect our lives.

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## APPENDICES

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## Appendix 1: Interview Topics

Interview Topics
Participation in <i>LAEP</i>
Experience of <i>LAEP</i>
Roles and responsibilities in <i>LAEP</i>
Knowledge and view of the <i>LAEP</i> policy documents
Management of the <i>LAEP</i> process
Community participation/representation in <i>LAEP</i>
Key issues/events
<i>LAEP</i> outcomes
Participants' issues throughout <i>LAEP</i>
Knowledge of the current <i>LAEP</i> process

## Appendix 2: Invitation to Participate in the Study

Dear

### **Re: Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury Study.**

I write to you as a PhD student at Murdoch University researching Local Area Education Planning processes in Bunbury between 1998-2000. The purpose of the research is to explore how key participants understood and experienced the enactment of the *Local Area Education Planning (LAEP) Framework* and processes in Bunbury, Western Australia in the period 1998-2000.

The research is being supervised by Associate Professor Barry Down, School of Education, Murdoch University.

My request is for approximately an hour of your time to participate in an interview to discuss your experiences in Local Area Education Planning. While I will ask you some questions about Local Area Education Planning I anticipate that the discussion will be informal in nature, providing you with the opportunity to elaborate on those issues you find most relevant. The benefits to you are that you will be able to discuss and reflect on your Local Area Education Planning experiences which when collated with other interview data will potentially influence policy development in the areas of education restructuring and community planning processes.

I also request with your permission to audio-tape our discussion. Once the tapes have been professionally transcribed, you will be provided with a copy of your transcript and will be invited to verify, amend or delete any part of the information.

Participation in this research is voluntary and you can decide to withdraw your consent without pressure or prejudice at any time. I also give my assurance that any information you provide will be treated as strictly confidential and that you will not be identified in either the research process or any publications arising from the research. Feedback on the study will be provided to participants prior to the completion and submission of the thesis.

If you are willing to participate in this study, could you please complete the attached *Disclosure and Consent Interview Form* and bring it to your interview. If you have any questions regarding this study please do not hesitate to contact either myself, Deborah O'Sullivan, at [dosullivan@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:dosullivan@murdoch.edu.au) or my supervisor, Associate Professor Barry Down on 9360709. My supervisor and I are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have on how this study will be conducted, or alternatively you can contact Murdoch University's Human Research Ethics Committee on 93606677.

I am hopeful of arranging our discussion for a time on or around (give date - day or week) and I will telephone you within the coming week to discuss the possibility of meeting with you and to arrange a specific time and location that are convenient to you.

Thank you for your time in considering this request and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah O'Sullivan  
PhD Research Student Murdoch University



### Appendix 3: Disclosure and Informed Interview Consent Form

**Project Title: Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury Western Australia: A Critical Policy Trajectory Study 1998-2000**

I.....consent to participate in the research project being undertaken by Deborah O'Sullivan for the award of PhD at Murdoch University. I understand that the aim of the research is to investigate and explore how key participants understood and experienced the enactment of the *Local Area Education Planning (LAEP) Framework* and processes in Bunbury, Western Australia in the period 1998-2000.

In giving my permission I understand the following:

- ❖ I have read and understood the *Letter of Invitation* concerning the nature and purpose of the study.
- ❖ Any questions I have regarding the study have been answered to my satisfaction.
- ❖ My interview will be audio-recorded and professionally transcribed by some-one other than the researcher.
- ❖ I am aware that I will be asked to examine the interview transcripts to ensure they are an accurate reflection of my statements.
- ❖ Any information that I provide to the researcher may be amended or deleted by me when I examine the transcript.
- ❖ The information I provide may be used for the thesis and for future publications.
- ❖ I realise that participation is voluntary and I may withdraw my consent at any time throughout the study without any pressure or prejudice.
- ❖ Every effort will be taken to ensure that I am not identified in the research process, the final thesis and future publications, and that my personal details will remain confidential. However, I acknowledge that some of my views about *LAEP* may be on the public record and no guarantee can be given that my opinions will not be recognised as mine.
- ❖ I wish to receive feedback on the research by:
  - being notified of the library location of the thesis Yes/No
  - receiving a summary of the thesis Yes/No
  - being placed on a waiting list for perusal of a copy of the thesis Yes/No
  - personal contact from the researcher Yes/No

Participant Signature.....

Full Name of Participant.....

Date:...../...../.....

Signed (Chief Investigator who must be a member of Murdoch Staff):.....

Date:...../...../.....

Signed (Investigator).....

Date:...../...../.....

## Appendix 4: Transcription Conventions

<b><u>LAYOUT</u></b> WORD PROCESSING FONT MARGINS INTERVIEWER INTERVIEWEE	WORD TIMES NEW ROMAN 12 LEFT 2CM, RIGHT 5CM D PSEUDONYMS
<b><u>Mono or Bi-syllabic Sounds</u></b> Thinking before someone speaks New information Listening and encouragement	<i>Um, ah</i> <i>Hmh, aha ha,</i> <i>Uhum, okay yes</i>
<b><u>Tone of Speaker</u></b> Word in italics	Some form of stress via pitch or tone
<b><u>Demonstrative Expressions</u></b> Words spoken while laughing Laughter when both parties are laughing Pauses in speech Interruptions Self talk/repeating what others said Repetitions Slang/swearing Involuntary expressions	<i>(Laughter)</i> <i>(Laughter)</i> <i>(pause)</i> Use <i>(inter.)</i> where there is a break (eg. phone call) Use quotation marks Type words (eg. <i>yes, yes.....</i> ) Words included in text (eg. <i>bloody, ain't</i> ) Sneezing, coughing (not included)
<b><u>Punctuation</u></b> End of a thought End of a phrase/thought not finished Grammatical errors  Incomprehensible speech	A period ( ) at the completion of the idea Use an ellipse ... as the speech trails off No correction unless participants changed transcript <i>(incomp)</i>
<b><u>References to other People</u></b> Identification of the names other participants and community members	No names used in the transcript only non identifiable titles or positions

These transcription conventions are a modified version of Tilley, S., & Powick, K. (2002). Distanced data: Transcribing other people's research tapes. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 27(2/3), p. 310.

## Appendix 5: Transcript Release Cover Letter

66 Stockley Rd  
BUNBURY  
WA 6230  
Ph. 97219026

Dear

**Re: Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury Western Australia: A Critical Policy Trajectory Study 1998-2000**

Thank you for your recent involvement in my PhD research into Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury and your helpful comments during our discussion.

A transcript of that discussion is enclosed for your consideration. Could you please read through the transcript and annotate at the side of the text those portions that you wish to amend. Also, please feel free to add any additional comments that you consider relevant. Upon its return to the above address, corrections to the transcript will be made and a final copy sent to you for your records.

I have also enclosed with this letter a *Transcript Release Form*. Even if you find the transcript to be a fair, accurate and relevant account of what was discussed and have no alterations that you wish to make, I would appreciate it if you would also return a completed form within 14 days of receiving your transcript.

I look forward to receiving your confirmation of the transcript and thank you again for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah O'Sullivan  
PhD Research Student Murdoch University

## Appendix 6: Transcript Release Form

**Project Title: Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury Western Australia: A Critical Policy Trajectory Study 1998-2000**

Following my review of the transcript of our discussion regarding Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury I confirm that I:

- ❖ The transcript is an accurate and relevant account of our discussion. I give my ongoing approval for the transcript to be used in your research as previously agreed.

Yes/No

- ❖ Amended the text to more accurately reflect the fairness, accuracy and relevance of the transcript with regard to our discussion about Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury. I understand that these alterations will be made to the original and that a revised transcript will be forwarded to me. I give my approval for the content of the transcript, and the amendments, to be incorporated in your research project.

Yes/No

Signature of Participant

.....

Date...../...../.....

## **Appendix 7: Follow-up Transcript Release Letter**

66 Stockley Rd  
BUNBURY WA 6014  
Ph 97219026

Dear

**Re: Transcript of Interview for Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury Western Australia Study**

Thank you for your involvement in my PhD research into Local Area Education in Bunbury and your helpful comments during our discussion.

Some weeks ago I sent you a copy of the transcript of our interview regarding Local Area Education Planning in Bunbury for you to consider whether it represented a fair, accurate and relevant account of what was discussed. I also enclosed a *Transcript Release Form* for you to complete so that you could indicate whether you require any amendments to be made to the transcript and for you to indicate ongoing consent for your participation in the study. If you have any queries please feel free to phone me on 97219026 to discuss any aspect of the transcript or the research.

If I do not hear from you within the next two weeks I will assume that 'no response' or a 'non-return' of the *Transcript Release Form* is an indication that they are willing for information from your transcript to be included in the thesis.

Thank you again for participating in this study.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah O'Sullivan  
PhD Research Student Murdoch University

## Appendix 8: Initial Themes

Themes	Themes
<p>Why and how became involved</p> <p>My contribution-skills, knowledge, expertise, experience</p> <p>Representatives/representativeness</p> <p>Competing views/agendas between interests</p> <p>Assumptions about role</p> <p>Competing roles</p> <p>Competing loyalties</p> <p>Usefulness of policy framework document roles &amp; responsibilities</p> <p>Connecting with my community-feeding back</p> <p>Working out my role</p> <p>Managing the process</p> <p>Dealing with difficult bureaucrats</p> <p>Being ignored</p> <p>Perceiving and unsettling agendas/dominant discourses</p> <p>Working out the game plan</p> <p>Activating the networks/shifting and joining alliances</p> <p>Activism and acts of resistance/strategies</p> <p>Personal and professional benefits and costs</p> <p>Disrupting what appears natural and the taken for granted</p> <p>Oppressive power relations</p> <p>Process is flawed/sham</p> <p>Pre-determined agendas</p> <p>Stories of optimism/hope/disillusionment</p> <p>Exhausting/waste of time</p> <p>Selling senior campuses</p> <p>Can you trust these people anyway?</p> <p>Drivers for changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>schools in crisis</li> <li>providing choice/diversity subjects</li> <li>school closures</li> <li>retention rates poor</li> <li>over emphasis on TEE</li> </ul> <p>Economic discourse versus community discourse</p> <p>Crisis discourse-poor performance issues</p> <p>Progressive education means structural change</p> <p>Community participation discourses/professional discourse</p> <p>Progressives/non progressives</p> <p>Resistance</p> <p>Managerialist discourse</p> <p>Blame</p> <p>Pre-determined policy agendas</p> <p>Ignoring democratic processes</p> <p>Reading policy differently</p> <p>Pre-determined agendas and outcomes</p> <p>When is a meeting not a meeting?</p> <p>Using amateurs to make professional decisions</p> <p>Critiquing the process</p> <p>Getting ideas on the agenda</p> <p>What about disability and race?</p> <p>Shared lives, shared teas and living close</p> <p>Status, knowledge and professional confidence</p> <p>Being part of a network</p> <p>Missing voices-students, Indigenous people</p> <p>Representing my community</p> <p>Not being heard-feeling angry/frustrated/silenced/marginalised</p> <p>Expectations of participation</p> <p>Understanding community participation in theory and practice</p>	<p>Expectations of planning process</p> <p>Consensus document</p> <p>Ideological differences</p> <p>Unsettling agendas/dominant discourses</p> <p>Working out the game plan</p> <p>Activating the networks/shifting and joining alliances</p> <p>Activism and acts of resistance/strategies</p> <p>Personal and professional benefits and costs</p> <p>Disrupting and challenging what appears natural and the taken for granted</p> <p>Oppressive power relations</p> <p>Strategies and tactics</p> <p>Challenging dominant discourse</p> <p>Relationships and personalities</p> <p>Informing community</p> <p>Politicising issues</p> <p>Challenging power relations</p> <p>Minority interests represented</p> <p>Ideological challenges</p> <p>Challenging how decisions made</p> <p>Who makes the decisions</p> <p>Who's running the process</p> <p>Transparency of process</p> <p>Challenging legitimacy of decision</p> <p>Centre/periphery relations</p> <p>Local issues/needs versus generic options</p> <p>Blaming individuals</p> <p>Loss of trust</p> <p>Tolerating difference</p> <p>No middle ground</p> <p>Meeting at Tower</p> <p>Australind walk out</p> <p>Politics and Education</p> <p>State election</p> <p>Politics and marginal seats-</p> <p>Manipulating outcomes for political ends</p> <p>Devolution/community participation</p> <p>History of <i>LAEP</i></p> <p>School Renewal</p> <p>History <i>LAEP</i> Bunbury</p> <p>Closing schools-educational/non-educational issues</p> <p>Why <i>LAEP</i>?-global national educational trends</p> <p>Economic restructuring</p> <p>Bureaucratic restructuring</p> <p>Keeping the status quo</p> <p>Inconclusive outcomes</p> <p>Eaton middle school</p> <p>Giving them what they wanted</p> <p>Placating community</p> <p>Not revealing agendas</p> <p>Closing down the <i>LAEP</i> process</p> <p>We'll achieve our change agenda</p> <p>Change of Government and inconclusive outcomes</p> <p>Achieving change agenda</p> <p>Locating participation-Arnstein's Ladder</p>

## Appendix 9: Key Themes

Key Themes	Key Themes
Becoming involved in <i>LAEP</i>	Roles and relationships: EDWA Central Office/District Office/Schools/Com
Understanding my role/representing my Community	Truth, trust and tolerance
Experiences of <i>LAEP</i>	Critical events/incidents
What's the problem with the high schools	Resisting <i>LAEP</i> : Oppositional tactics and strategies
Predetermined policy agendas	Education Restructuring: Global, state and local contexts
Promoting middles schools and a senior campus discourses:	<i>LAEP</i> outcomes
Community participation: Putting up a camouflage	Reactivating <i>LAEP</i>
Contested readings of the <i>LAEP</i> policy	
Who and how decisions are made	

## Appendix 10: Key Focusing Events

<p><b>1. LAEP Secondary Drafting Committee Meeting July 28, 1998</b></p> <p>Following the development of the Secondary Drafting Committee's <i>LAEP Draft Options Plan</i>, the District Director (Schools) presented his recommended Options or models which collapsed the Secondary Drafting Committee's nine Options to four. All of his four Options recommended the closure of BSHS and the introduction of a senior campus co-located with TAFE and ECU. One of his models recommended the closure of BPS which is a feeder school for BSHS.</p>
<p><b>2. Meeting at the Tower between Community Members, Senior School Administrators and EDWA Senior Administrators on August 12, 1998</b></p> <p>In response to the four Options developed by the District Director (Schools), <i>LAEP</i> community representatives expressed concerns about the drafting process, in particular that all Options closed BSHS and one option proposed the closure of BPS. The Executive Director of EDWA confirmed that the closure of BPS remained an option.</p>
<p><b>3. The District Director (Schools) Addresses a Special P &amp; C Meeting at BPS on August 17, 1998</b></p> <p>The community members remained concerned that EDWA planned to close BPS and BSHS.</p>
<p><b>4. Public meeting at BSH School August 26, 1998</b></p> <p>The meeting was attended by over 150 people. Many community members were increasingly concerned that BSHS would close and that EDWA planned to introduce a senior college without consultation with the local community.</p>
<p><b>5. The First LAEP Primary School Planning Meeting September 17, 1998</b></p> <p>The <i>LAEP</i> community representatives were refused an opportunity by EDWA administrators to put a motion to the meeting that addressed issues about the meeting process. Parents from several schools subsequently commenced a campaign in the media and with politicians to raise issues about the <i>LAEP</i> process and the potential for school closures in Bunbury.</p>
<p><b>6. A Meeting between the Minister for Education and LAEP BSH Representatives on October 7, 1998</b></p> <p>Community representatives claimed that there was considerable public outrage at the process of drafting and consultation for secondary schools and that EDWA had an agenda to close BSHS and introduce a senior campus under the guise of community participation. The Minister suggested that BSHS could become the site for a senior campus. The community representative felt that the Minister for education dismissed their concerns about school closures and the <i>LAEP</i> process.</p>
<p><b>7. LAEP Secondary Consultative Committee Meeting on February 16, 1999</b></p> <p>A local EDWA official was quoted in a local newspaper as speaking on behalf of the <i>LAEP</i> Secondary Consultative Committee in support of the introduction of a senior campus in Bunbury. In response to the article, parent representatives requested that these statements be withdrawn.</p>
<p><b>8. LAEP Secondary Consultative Committee March 10, 1999</b></p> <p>An EDWA official refused to rescind the comments regarding the introduction of a senior campus in a media statement in one of the local newspapers in Bunbury. The conflict between EDWA officials and community representatives escalated to the point that five of the <i>LAEP</i> community representatives walked out of the meeting and issued a comprehensive media statement describing the <i>LAEP</i> as a flawed process.</p>
<p><b>9. Consultation Committee Meeting Secondary (Extraordinary Meeting), May 26, 1999.</b></p> <p>An announcement was made at this meeting that the Minister had appointed a new facilitator for the <i>LAEP</i> process in Bunbury.</p>
<p><b>10. LAEP Options Public Consultation and Voting Process May 22 to June 14, 2000</b></p> <p>A total of 769 submissions were received and 86.5 percent of respondents voted for the first option (Option A) which was to retain the existing Year 8 to 12 Senior High School structure with enhancements.</p>



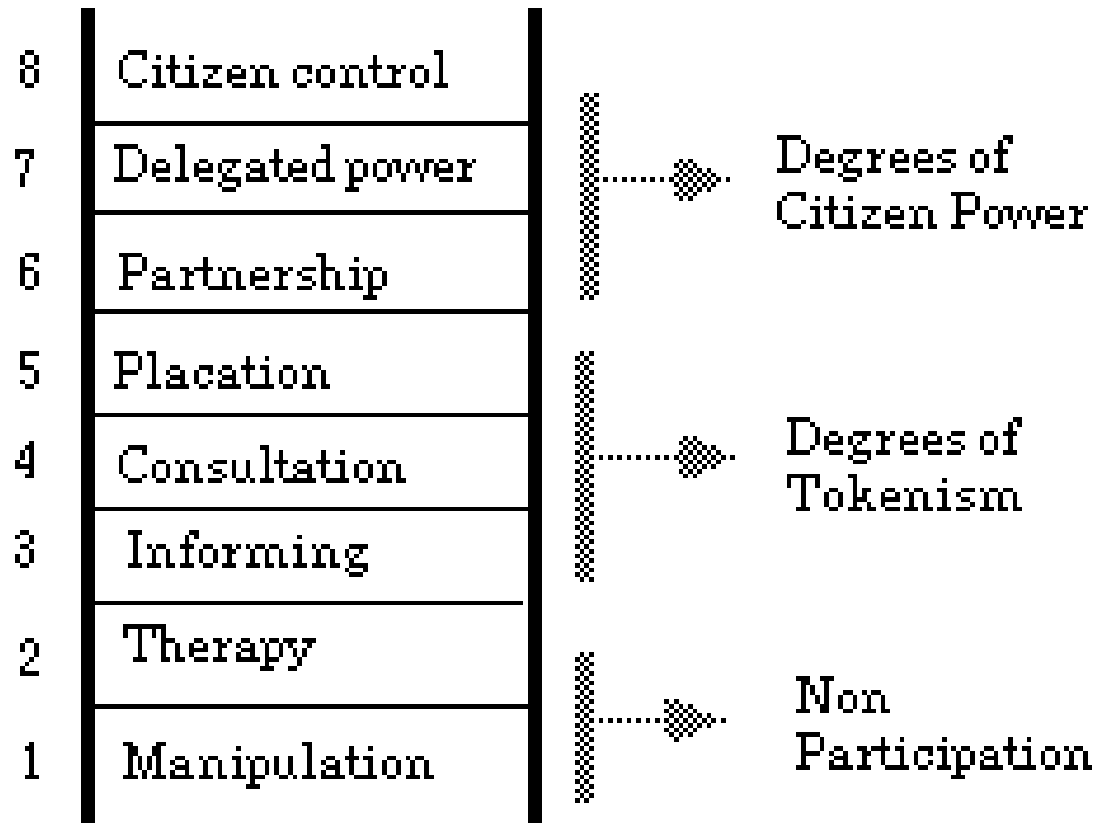
## Appendix 11: *LAEP* Themes and Sub-Themes

<p><b>Participation and Experiences of <i>LAEP</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for participation</li> <li>• Why and how became involved</li> <li>• Knowledge, expertise and experience</li> <li>• Constructing/understanding roles: Policy framework document</li> <li>• Roles, responsibilities and boundaries</li> <li>• Stories of optimism/hope/disillusionment</li> </ul>
<p><b>What Problems are <i>LAEP</i> to Address?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor performance of staff and students</li> <li>• Inefficient use of resources and economising discourses</li> <li>• Lack of competitiveness</li> <li>• Locating blame</li> <li>• Competing constructions of the problems: Whose interests and who benefits?</li> <li>• Who has the right to participate and be heard?</li> <li>• Constructing the problem to fit pre-determined Central Office agendas and solutions</li> <li>• Promoting middles schools and a senior campus discourses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenging <i>LAEP</i>: Contestation, Dilemmas and Contradictions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who and how decisions made</li> <li>• Focusing events: Social activism and acts of resistance</li> <li>• Contesting <i>LAEP</i>: Truth, trust, tolerance and blame</li> <li>• Exercising power through challenging dominant discourses</li> <li>• Community schooling versus managerial discourses</li> <li>• State power, closing down the process and <i>LAEP</i> outcomes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reactivating <i>LAEP</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predetermined outcomes</li> <li>• Closing down community participation-corporate memory</li> </ul>

## Appendix 12: Reconstructed *LAEP* Themes

<p><b>Participation in <i>LAEP</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for participation</li> <li>• The who and why of community representation: Middle class representation</li> <li>• Issues of inclusion/exclusion of groups</li> <li>• Lived experience of participating in <i>LAEP</i>: Stories of optimism/hope/disillusionment</li> <li>• Levels of participation</li> <li>• Policy spaces and becoming a <i>LAEP</i> representative</li> </ul>
<p><b>Constructing the Problem with Public Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education restructuring: Global, state and local contexts/policies/trends</li> <li>• The problems with WA education</li> <li>• The problems with the local high schools: Competing discourses</li> <li>• Who is responsible for the problems</li> <li>• Contested views about the solutions</li> <li>• Promoting pre-determined agendas</li> <li>• Exercising power and manipulating outcomes: Ideology of Expertism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contesting <i>LAEP</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda-building and the micro politics of resistance</li> <li>• Focusing events</li> <li>• Mobilising community resistance to pre-determined agendas</li> <li>• Challenging dominant discourses: Tactics, political manoeuvres and creating alternative policy spaces</li> <li>• State initiated policy settlements and refocusing control: Constraining and enabling factors</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reactivating <i>LAEP</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predetermined outcomes - senior campus</li> <li>• Closing down community participation-corporate memory</li> </ul>

### Appendix 13: Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation



Source: Arnstein, S. (1969) A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), p. 217.

## Appendix 14: Bunbury Schools' Planning Group Minutes, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1996

BUNBURY SCHOOLS PLANNING GROUP  
Bunbury Districts Education Office  
Monday 17 June, 1996



### PRESENT

[REDACTED]

### APOLOGY

[REDACTED]

- Discussion centred on the question as to how to proceed
- Decisions were made that the planning group make a series of recommendations to Corporate Executive.
- As a basis for recommendations the option outlined in the meeting on May 6 would be used. That is:
  - Build a new school at Dalgellup by the year 2000 to lessen the impact on Adam Road, and secondly to reduce the number of schools in the inner Bunbury area from 3 level 5s to 2 level 5s. The logical school to close when considering Coinda PS, Bunbury PS and South Bunbury PS is recommended as Bunbury PS.

Bunbury PS to be used as a holding school for Gelorup/Stratham students until such time as the new school at Dalgellup be constructed.

- Recommended time line for action (See attached)
- Boundaries for 1997

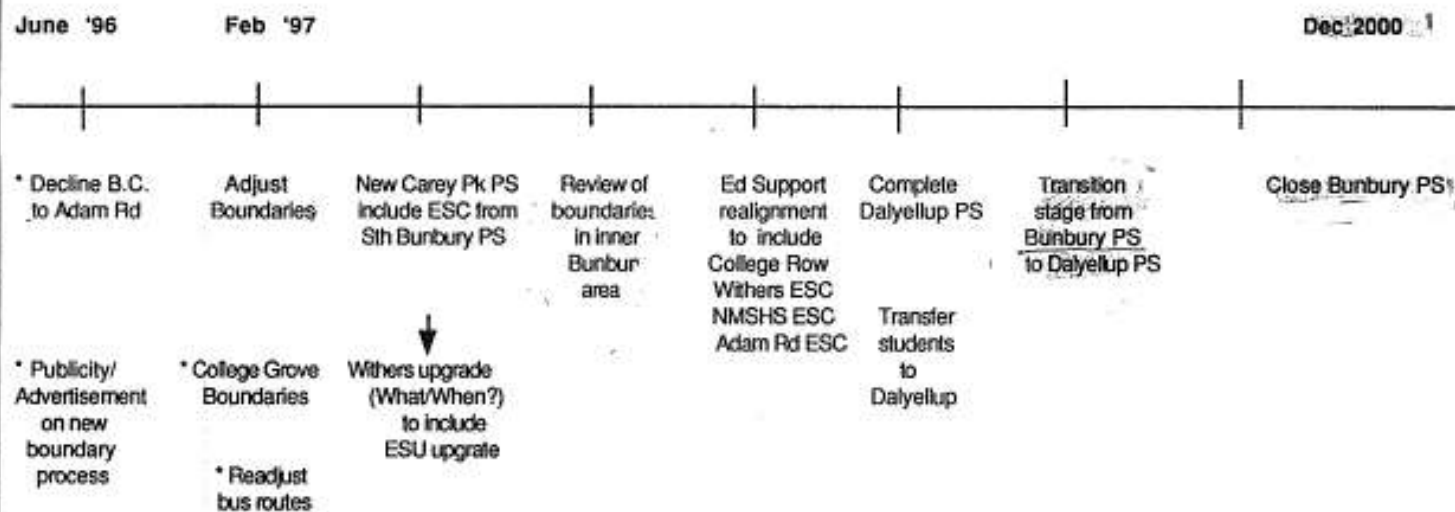
The following recommendations relating to boundaries be endorsed and implemented at the commencement of the 1997 school year.

#### (a) Bunbury PS: Beach Road to Blair Street

Area south of Beach Road which was gazetted 'optional' be zoned to Sth Bunbury PS, however, siblings of students who currently attend Bunbury PS from optional area have the right to attend Bunbury PS.

## TIMELINE FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

Key : \* Procedural Matters to be Addressed



**Appendix 15: President of the BSHS Alumni Letter to the Minister  
for Education, September 25, 1998**

*Bunbury Senior High School  
Ex Students' and Staff Association*

*Tel/Fax - [REDACTED]*

25 September 1998

The Hon C J Barnett, M Sc, MLA  
Minister for Education  
19th Floor  
197 St George's Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Minister

**BUNBURY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL.**

This year Bunbury Senior High School is celebrating its 75th Anniversary, not only of time but of achievement in terms of the high quality of education it has provided and continues to provide, and of its great service to the community. In earlier years it was the only school in the public education sector able to offer the opportunity of a secondary education to young people in the lower Southwest. The celebration of the 75th Anniversary is not simply one of nostalgic memories but one of recognition of its quality which has been present for three quarters of a century.

The very location of Bunbury High School, now Bunbury Senior High School, with its imposing buildings, not high above the City of Bunbury might suggest that its founders had some inkling of the role it was destined to play. Therefore, it was with dismay that a great many people associated with the School have become aware of proposals that could lead to the closure of the School. This concern is heightened by the fact that the consultation process relating to the proposals about the possible future of the School has not included many who consider themselves to be stakeholders or at least very interested parties in current affairs of the School and its future. An important and substantial group in this category is the Ex Students and Staff Association of the School. After being briefed about proposals for the future of the School, that have been put forward by the District Director, a strongly attended Annual Reunion of the former students and staff held in Perth on 19 September 1998 requested unanimously that the following resolution be forwarded to you for your consideration and response.

*Former students and staff of Bunbury High School and Bunbury Senior High School, with strong attachment to their school, met in Perth at their Annual Reunion on 19 September 1998.*

*After briefing about recommendations, or draft recommendations prepared by the District Director in respect of Secondary Schooling in the Central Bunbury District, they wish to express their disappointment at the absence of any consultation with the Bunbury Senior High School Ex-Students and Staff Association about the School and its future.*

*The former students and staff wish to request that this situation be corrected, to acknowledge the critical role of the School over many decades in providing an opportunity, and for many the only opportunity in the lower Southwest, of access to a quality secondary school and education, and to acknowledge the esteem in which the School is held and the high quality of education and life experience which it continues to offer.*

*The Reunion meeting expressed its surprise and disappointment that in the School's 75th Anniversary Year, a School which has helped educate and shape many leaders in our community, a process should be put in hand which is inimically insensitive to the history and role of the School and to its alumni. The meeting also expressed its surprise that a School which continues to provide outstanding opportunities for its students, staff and parents should be viewed with such lack of understanding.*

Yours sincerely,

Chairman

## **Appendix 16: Towards A Better Framework for Education Planning in the Bunbury District**

### **NOTE TO THOSE INTERESTED IN EDUCATION PLANNING IN THE BUNBURY DISTRICT**

#### **Towards A Better Framework for Education Planning in the Bunbury District**

Following the meeting at Bunbury Senior High School to discuss the LAEP process and proposals to close the Senior High School and the Bunbury Primary School, the Member for Bunbury has stated that he does not support the process and outcomes of the drafting phase (Stage 1 of the LAEP strategy).

The Local member is keen to put an alternative framework to the Minister for Education (Colin Barnett) who is to visit Bunbury on Wednesday 7th October.

Attached is a suggested alternative for further discussion. It is essential that a clear statement is agreed to by all interested parties over the next 4 weeks for presentation to the Minister. In this regard I suggest that the Community Planning Group (or other label) meets as soon as possible to discuss options.

Prepared by [REDACTED]  
LAEP Parent Representative



**LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING**  
**BUNBURY DISTRICT AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1998**

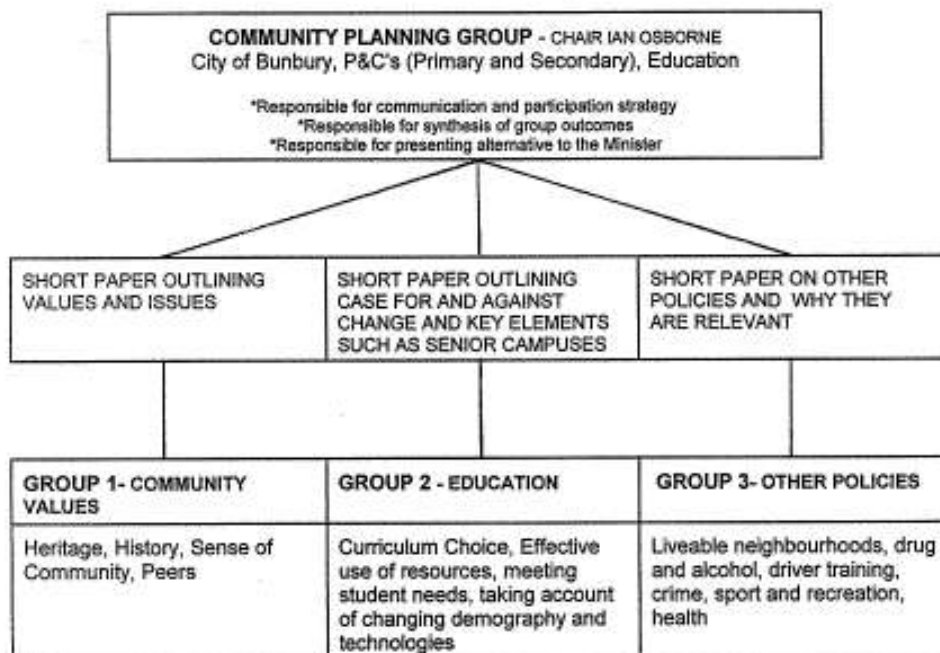
**1. Why the Bunbury community does not accept the outcomes of Stage 1 (Developing a draft Plan) of the Planning Process.**

- \* The P&C's and wider community had not been adequately informed of matters being discussed (including school closures) during the drafting phase
- \* There was no clear, concise and balanced case put as to why we needed to change the current system in the Bunbury District
- \* The planning phase was conducted in haste thereby not allowing considered and comprehensive debate
- \* There was no integration of primary, secondary and tertiary education values, issues and objectives
- \* There was no social impact analysis which addresses values associated with history, heritage and sense of community
- \* Other relevant and complementary policies of government (e.g. drugs and alcohol, crime, sport and recreation, families, unemployment) not considered
- \* Minority and ethnic groups and aboriginal people not included in process
- \* A majority view expressed by the Drafting Committee that outcomes were pre-determined and that *the Committee was not satisfied that it had met its terms of reference.*

## 2. Towards a better framework for education planning in the Bunbury District

2.1 The primary objective of any planning process is to involve as many members of the community as possible to ensure that outcomes have a high level of community ownership. This is necessarily time consuming and resource intensive and requires appropriate expertise to be effective.

2.2 To address the areas of concern expressed by the Bunbury Community the following framework is suggested.



2.3 The Community Planning Group is to formulate processes for;

- \* **Public participation.** To include newsletters, use of media, workshops and other forums. Must devise strategy to include aborigines, ethnic groups and those that are disadvantaged.
- \* **Synthesis of information.** What weighting will be applied for various values and issues
- \* **Presentation to Minister.** Delegation, public forum.

## LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING BUNBURY DISTRICT

### 1.BACKGROUND

1.1 Local Area Education Planning (LAEP) is one strategy contained in the *Plan for Government School Education 1998 - 2000*. This policy document and the framework for undertaking local area education planning has been endorsed by Cabinet.

1.2 The LAEP process was to be applied to secondary schools and primary schools in the Bunbury District separately. The secondary school process has completed Stage 1 called "Developing a Draft Plan" and is now to proceed to Stage 2 of the process called "Consultation With School Communities". *(It should be noted that the Bunbury Senior High School community group, which includes other high schools, is not satisfied that Stage 1 has been adequately completed).*

1.3 The LAEP process has been applied in Perth, Geraldton, Albany and Mandurah. There has been significant public concern about how the process has been applied. In particular, the manner in which communities have been consulted and issues and values are dealt with by the Education Department.

1.4 The Drafting Committee which was responsible for Stage 1 of the secondary school process produced 9 options for consideration during the consultation Stage. Two significant matters emerged at the end of the Stage 1 process;

[i] The Bunbury Primary School was named in one of the options for closure. The Bunbury Primary School representative on the drafting committee stated at a public meeting that this recommendation was included at the insistence of the District Director of the Education Department and,

[ii] The District Director of the Education Department made four recommendations to the Director General for Education which all closed Bunbury Senior High School. Importantly these recommendations were not endorsed by the drafting committee.

### 2. PUBLIC RESPONSE TO PLANNING PROPOSALS

2.1 At a meeting held in the Bunbury Tower on August 13 attended by the secondary drafting committee, the District Director of the Education Department and the Executive Director of the Education Department (Perth), concerns were expressed that the drafting committee had not met its terms of reference as required in the policy document.

Concerns were also expressed that other values such as history, heritage and sense of community were not considered. Several members of the drafting committee were of the opinion that there was limited debate over options and they had been hurried and pushed into outcomes. It was also stated that there was no provision for a social impact analysis of the options.

The issue of naming Bunbury Primary School for closure was raised and the District Director stated that it was an option put forward and he did not think it appropriate to exclude it. Importantly, the Executive Director of the Education Department stated in his concluding comments that Bunbury Primary School was a “big issue not a small issue”.

2.2 The outcomes from the above meeting generated considerable community concern about the future of both the Bunbury Senior High School and the Bunbury Primary School. As a consequence, a special meeting at the Bunbury Primary School was held on August 17 and was attended by 84 parents and teachers. Attached is a copy of the minutes of that meeting. Significant issues that emerged from this meeting included;

- [i] There was strong evidence that the drafting committee in the secondary process had not met their terms of reference,

- [ii] The District Director had previously been involved in a planning meeting (internal Education Department) which resolved to close the Bunbury Primary School by the year 2000,

- [iii] The District Director was named by the Bunbury Primary representative on the secondary drafting group as the person that insisted on the inclusion of the closure of Bunbury Primary in one of the options,

- [iv] The District Director would provide no explanation of what the Executive Director meant when he stated that Bunbury Primary was a big issue not a small issue,

- [v] There was a need for the primary and secondary processes to be run at the same time because changes in secondary affected primary and vice versa.

2.3 The Bunbury Senior High School also called a special P&C meeting which was held on August 26 and attended by a large number of concerned parents, (near capacity in the performing arts building at the High School). Attached are the minutes from that meeting which also raised major concerns about the process. Of particular interest are the concluding comments of the Member for Bunbury.

2.4 In an attempt to discuss the issues that had emerged from the above public forums, the Bunbury Primary School P&C invited the District Director to a further special meeting at the Primary School on September 1. At that meeting the Director delivered the “decision” of the Director General to commence the Primary School Drafting Stage 1 and move the Secondary Process to Consultation - Stage 2 (see attached). The primary schools were given until the end of the year to complete their planning (effectively 8 weeks for 11 primary schools) and the secondary process is to be completed in April next year. Serious concerns were expressed over the very short time frames and the way in which the process was being conducted.

### 3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 On September 17, three meetings were held. The City of Bunbury Community Committee, The Bunbury Senior High School Community Committee and the 1st meeting of the Primary School Drafting Committee. The Council committee minutes have been distributed and this report is in response to the outcome of the meeting.

The senior High School meeting attended by the Mayor resolved to prepare a statement of concerns around the LAEP process and a revised planning process for presentation to the Hon Minister for Education during his visit on October 7.

The Primary School Drafting Committee meeting generated considerable debate around the process. The issues raised were not adequately addressed and as a consequence the Bunbury Primary School P&C at its most recent meeting resolved to advise all parents of the possibility of school closure. The attached note was circulated to parents. Also attached is a chart which summarizes issues at State, regional and local levels.

3.2 The Hon Minister for Education will be meeting with the Mayor and representatives of the Bunbury, Newton Moore and Australind Senior High Schools on Wednesday October 7, 1998. Primary schools will not be represented at that meeting.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council resolve to;

[i] Advise the Hon Minister for Education that it does not support the closure of Bunbury Senior High School and/or Bunbury Primary School and seeks the Minister's assurance that closures will not occur,

[ii] Request that the Hon Minister for Education increases the level of community representation in the planning process and to expand the terms of reference to include issues and values other than those associated with education,

[iii] Request that the Hon Minister for Education extend the time periods for planning and consultation to allow comprehensive research and debate and to facilitate the bringing together of primary and secondary planning.

CABINET (Endorsed LAEP)			ISSUES (NOT EXHAUSTIVE)
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION	(Responsible for LAEP implementation)	MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING	
			STATE GOVERNMENT
PRIMARY/SECONDARY	ECU	TAFE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Director General</li><li>• Senior Executive</li></ul> <div>Neil Jarvis</div> <div>Barry Bastow</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forum for Principals</li></ul> <div>School Principals</div> <div>P&amp;C Presidents</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Councils</li><li>• Parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• University Council</li></ul> <div>Vice Chancellor</div> <div>Faculty Dean</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faculty Board</li><li>• Senior Management</li></ul> <div>Faculty Dean</div> <div>Chair Uni Advisory Board</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chief Executive Forum</li></ul> <div>CEO Training</div> <div>CEO</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• College Executive</li></ul> <div>CEO</div> <div>Governing Council</div>	
DISTRICT/REGIONAL			
LOCAL			
LOCAL GOVERNMENT			
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT			
BROAD COMMUNITY			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Service Clubs</li><li>• Sporting Clubs</li><li>• Religious Organisations</li></ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other community groups</li><li>• Individuals/Families</li></ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EDWA budget problem (Not Confirmed)</li><li>• Auditor General call for rationalisation of resources</li><li>• Commitment to Senior Campuses next to University</li><li>• WACSSO changes to policy not public</li><li>• Comment by Executive Director (LAEP) that Bunbury Primary School has major problems that are not going away.</li><li>• Community concern about process (esp Perth)</li><li>• Relationship to other Government policy eg. law and Order &amp; Planning</li><li>• Long Standing agenda to close Bunbury Primary</li><li>• No Social Impact assessment</li><li>• Separation of primary and secondary planning</li><li>• Director recommending 4 options which close BSHS—No mandate for this</li><li>• Did drafting committee meet their terms of reference</li><li>• Standard of education at BSHS and cost of upgrading facilities. Insufficient area argument</li><li>• No agreement on Senior Campus with Edith Cowan and TAFE—Process lacking (Bottom-up)</li><li>• No clear statements on why we need change (Supported by research)</li><li>• Limited knowledge of process in community</li><li>• Previous plan to close BPS</li><li>• Retention of heritage values</li><li>• Historical links (Craig House Reunion)</li><li>• Promoting a sense of community</li><li>• Bunbury City Council not aware of closure options</li><li>• Order of priority given to Education in the budget relative to roads and other areas of Govt activity.</li></ul>			

- EDWA budget problem (Not Confirmed)
- Auditor General call for rationalisation of resources
- Commitment to Senior Campuses next to University
- WACSSO changes to policy not public
- Comment by Executive Director (LAEP) that Bunbury Primary School has major problems that are not going away.
- Community concern about process (esp Perth)
- Relationship to other Government policy eg. law and Order & Planning
- Long Standing agenda to close Bunbury Primary
- No Social Impact assessment
- Separation of primary and secondary planning
- Director recommending 4 options which close BSHS—No mandate for this
- Did drafting committee meet their terms of reference
- Standard of education at BSHS and cost of upgrading facilities. Insufficient area argument
- No agreement on Senior Campus with Edith Cowan and TAFE—Process lacking (Bottom-up)
- No clear statements on why we need change (Supported by research)
- Limited knowledge of process in community
- Previous plan to close BPS
- Retention of heritage values
- Historical links (Craig House Reunion)
- Promoting a sense of community
- Bunbury City Council not aware of closure options
- Order of priority given to Education in the budget relative to roads and other areas of Govt activity.

**DRAFT**

**Appendix 17: Media release: Local Area Education Planning a Sham**  
**September 22, 1998**

**LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING A SHAM**

A NUMBER OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDING THE FIRST MEETING TO DISCUSS THE LAEP PROCESS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN BUNBURY TODAY EXPRESSED DISMAY AND CONCERN AT THE WAY IN WHICH THE PROCESS WAS PROCEEDING.

THE LAEP REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH COOINDA AND BUNBURY PRIMARY SCHOOLS WERE REFUSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO PUT A MOTION TO THE MEETING THAT THERE BE A FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING.

ACCORDING TO [REDACTED], THE LAEP REPRESENTATIVE FROM COOINDA PS, [REDACTED] THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF EDWA, DECLARED IN RESPONSE TO THE MOTION THAT HE WAS RUNNING THE PROCESS, THAT THERE WOULD BE NO CHANGE TO THE AGENDA AND NO VOTES TAKEN.

"THERE WERE A NUMBER OF US TRYING TO GET THE MEETING TO BE MORE OPEN AND TO RESIST THIS PROCESS BEING DRIVEN SOLELY BY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT STAFF," [REDACTED] SAID. "AFTER THE DISASTER OF THE SECONDARY DRAFTING PHASE WHICH RECOMMENDED THE CLOSURE OF BUNBURY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL WITHOUT ADEQUATE PARENT INPUT OR INFORMATION, WE HAD HOPED THAT THE PRIMARY PROCESS WOULD BE MORE OPEN AND CONSULTATIVE."

ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] WHO REPRESENTS BUNBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL ON THE DRAFTING

COMMITTEE, THERE IS A GROWING CONSENSUS NOW IN THE COMMUNITY ABOUT WHAT WENT WRONG WITH THE SECONDARY DRAFTING PROCESS AND A GENUINE DESIRE TO GET THINGS RIGHT THIS TIME.

A MAJORITY OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES SUPPORTED A SUGGESTION THAT THE DRAFTING PHASE BE DELAYED UNTIL NEXT YEAR WHEN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES ARE NOT SO BUSY IN THE LEAD UP TO THE END OF THE YEAR. "POSTPONING THE PROCESS WOULD ALSO ALLOW TIME FOR MORE DISCUSSION ABOUT BRINGING TOGETHER THE PLANNING FOR PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLING" [REDACTED] SAID. "I CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE HASTE WITH WHICH THIS PROCESS IS PROCEEDING. MANY OF US ARE NOW EXPECTED TO BE INVOLVED IN DRAFTING FOR PRIMARY AND CONSULTATION FOR SECONDARY AT THE SAME TIME. THIS IS ABSURD AND WILL NOT MAKE GOOD USE OF ALL THOSE PEOPLE IN THE COMMUNITY WHO HAVE VALUABLE INPUT TO MAKE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION."

**Appendix 18: Member for Bunbury Statement on “Super School  
Proposal” September 24, 1998**

ON WEDNESDAY 12 AUGUST I MET WITH COLIN BARNETT, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, TO EXPRESS MY CONCERNS ABOUT THE LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING PROCESS WHICH INCLUDES A RECOMMENDATION TO CLOSE BUNBURY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND CONVERT AUSTRALIAN AND NEWTON MOORE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS INTO MIDDLE SCHOOLS. THE MEETING WAS CONVENED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY IN RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY CONCERNS THAT THE LAEP PROCESS HAD GONE OFF THE RAILS. I TOLD THE MINISTER THAT I BELIEVE THE LAEP PROCESS SHOULD HAVE PRESENTED KEEPING THE *STATUS QUO* AS AN OPTION AND THAT IF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ADOPTED A RECOMMENDATION WHICH ENDORSED A MOVE TO A SENIOR COLLEGE WITHOUT COMMUNITY SUPPORT **I WOULD NOT SUPPORT THAT RECOMMENDATION.**

I HAVE NOT BEEN PERSUADED THAT THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS WITH THE DELIVERY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE BUNBURY DISTRICT. COLIN BARNETT CONFIRMED ALSO THAT HE HAS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT OUR LOCAL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS ARE NOT DOING A GOOD JOB...THE ONUS SHOULD NOT BE ON LOYAL SCHOOL COMMUNITIES TO DISPROVE THE ASSERTIONS OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT THAT SENIOR COLLEGE IN THE ONLY OPTION FOR THE FUTURE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN BUNBURY. COLIN BARNETT ADVISED ME THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED A SENIOR EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL TO COME TO BUNBURY TO CORRECT THE LAEP PROCESS SO THAT THE BUNBURY COMMUNITY IS ENGAGED IN A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE.

HE HAS REITERATED A COMMITMENT HE GAVE ME TWO YEARS AGO THAT CHANGE WILL NOT OCCUR WITHOUT COMMUNITY SUPPORT.

Prepared by [REDACTED]



## Appendix 19: Schools and the Community Paper

### BUNBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL P&C MEETING OCTOBER 25 REPORT ON LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING (LAEP) - SECONDARY

Dear Members,


Since last reporting on this process there has been several meetings of the Committee. The meetings have attempted to better inform the Bunbury community about different approaches to secondary education including middle schools, a senior campus and the interface between vocational education and TAFE.

You may recall that the process of drafting options, adoption of a plan by the Education Department and consulting with the community on that plan, was rejected by the Bunbury community. The Minister for Education agreed to extend the amount of time available to prepare options and consult with the community and to the appointment of an independent facilitator. (Previously the District Director).

The timetable for the modified process is for the option, or options, to be agreed to by the end of this year by the Committee. The Minister has stated that he will be making a decision on the recommendations put to him by this time next year (2000) following public consultation. There will be two more meetings this year and one of the options to be considered will be submitted by a community group linked to the Bunbury Senior High School. The attached paper titled "*Schools And The Community*" was my contribution to the option being developed by the Bunbury Senior High School group.

At such time as the option/s are available, I will provide a report to the P&C and to the school community. There continues to be cause for concern about the sincerity and integrity of the process as there is evidence that the Education Department is philosophically "locked in" to the middle school and senior campus model. It would also appear that this position is supported by TAFE and Edith Cowan University. Given the very high level at which this position is endorsed or adopted, it will be extremely difficult for this community to have an effective voice in the decision making process.

Given the above, the closure of Bunbury Senior High School or its conversion to a Senior Campus cannot be ruled out. This will have direct implications for our primary school and I would therefore encourage all members of our school community to maintain a strong interest in the LAEP process.

  
22 October 1999

## SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

*The purpose of this paper is to highlight the need to include urban and regional planning objectives and strategies in the Local Area Education Planning for the Bunbury District. The importance of primary and secondary schools in defining neighbourhoods and creating a sense of community is identified in four State Government endorsed planning documents. The nexus between education planning policy and land use planning policy has revealed several issues that require further investigation and discussion. In particular the under provision of school sites and infrastructure for the long term growth of the Greater Bunbury area.*

### 1. BACKGROUND

A review of the literature associated with Local Area Education Planning in the Bunbury District reveals limited reference to the role schools play in contributing to viable communities. This is despite the matter being raised regularly at planning forums.

The physical location of schools (both primary and secondary) is particularly important as they provide a focal point for community activity and an essential element in the character and amenity of a locality (e.g. Bunbury Senior High School is a major landmark and has heritage significance). Many social interaction and focal points such as corner stores, the butcher, hardware, greengrocer, the post office and bank agency have gone in neighbourhoods. This can be attributed to factors such as increased mobility, changes in the workplace (especially dual income households), rationalisation of public services and infrastructure and the role of large corporations in starving small businesses through economies of scale and market control.

To achieve the best education outcomes for students there must be recognition of the community context for their activities. Education is not a service or commodity that starts and finishes at the school gates. Integrating schools with the wider community can provide stability, support and security for children and young adults and contribute to a healthy and resilient society.

### 2. PLANNING POLICIES

The neighbourhood has traditionally been defined, in town planning terms, as a primary school catchment. The school was generally at the centre of a suburban housing area and was within walking distance. Until recently primary schools had a catchment population of 2,500-3,000 persons (or 1000 dwelling units) and four primary schools comprised the catchment for a senior high school. The catchment numbers for primary and high schools have been revised up by the Education Department of W.A. to 1800 single residential lots (or approximately 5,220 persons based on an occupancy rate of 2.9 per household) and 9000 single residential lots for a senior high school (or approximately 26,100 persons).<sup>\*</sup> It has not been possible to obtain the research that has lead to this major change although there is a clear agenda to rationalise resources and increase student numbers at government schools as well as plan for household structure changes.

Advice from the Ministry for Planning and private planning consultants is that the revised figures can vary depending on the internal analysis of an area by the Education Department. Informal advice from the Education Department is that the catchment requirements for schools are too high. It has also been confirmed that the school site criteria were based on the Perth metropolitan area and are difficult to apply in country areas.

<sup>\*</sup>School Site Criteria supplied by the Education Department in June 1999

Unlike Perth, the Bunbury district has an uneven distribution of population and includes many small settlements and regional towns that have insufficient population to support a high school or "standard sized" primary schools.

A further area of concern is that criteria are only available for new areas. School closures and rationalisation of school sites in established areas appear not to be based on long term inter-generational considerations. This means that a standard school catchment population may be re-established in an area that has low numbers of children now, as a residential area goes through a transition from "old age" to "young".

The Education Department of WA has Government endorsed objectives and strategies to manage education planning and operations.

There is also Government endorsed objectives and strategies to manage physical planning (essentially land use planning) throughout Western Australia. The W.A. Planning Commission has a hierarchy of policy documents ranging from the State Planning Strategy to regional plans to local structure plans.

The following is a synopsis of these policy documents as they relate to planning for social infrastructure and communities.

#### **The State Planning Strategy (1997)**

The Strategy is based on 5 guiding principles including a Community Principle that is; "To respond to social changes and facilitate the creation of vibrant, accessible safe and self reliant communities". Strategies and actions associated with this principle include;

- (i) Revising standards for school provision so that when the demographics or needs of a community change, schools can be adapted for other purposes.
- (ii) Ensuring that urban design considerations in the Liveable Neighbourhoods: Community Design Code for residential land maximises the potential to foster a strong sense of community, and a safe accessible built environment.
- (iii) Specific criteria for planning include; providing a central community focus, ensuring that the primary school has safe walking and cycling access and relates to an open space system.

#### **Liveable Neighbourhoods: Community Design Code (1997)**

Objectives within the Code include;

- (i) To facilitate an environmentally sustainable approach to urban development by minimising non-renewable energy use and car dependence, encouraging greater self containment of neighbourhoods and towns and protecting key natural and cultural assets.
- (ii) To provide safe, convenient and attractive neighbourhoods and towns that meet the diverse and changing needs of the community and offer a wide choice of housing, leisure, local employment opportunity and associated community and commercial facilities.
- (iii) To develop a coherent urban system of compact walkable neighbourhoods which cluster to form towns with a high degree of street connectivity,

- (iv) To ensure a site responsive approach to urban development that supports and enhances the context in which it is located, strengthens local character and identity and promotes a sense of community.

*A neighbourhood unit is defined by a five minute walk from the centre to its perimeter, which is approximately 400 metres.*

#### **W.A. Planning Commission Policy Manual - DC 2.4 School Sites (1999)**

This document provides detailed policy measures for planners and developers and has statutory force as provided under Section 5AA of the Town Planning and Development Act. Two important qualifications are necessary when reading this policy. Firstly it relates to new subdivisions and development and secondly, there is limited reference to regional, rural and remote areas.

Key components of the policy for the purposes of this paper are as follows.

Experience has shown that there is a correlation between the number of single residential lots created by subdivision and the need for school sites. However, although that correlation is useful in determining the broad need for school sites, it is necessary in each particular case to assess the need against existing school sites, established schools, rates and type of development (including the consideration of demographic profiles and block pricing policies), the opportunities for co-location of other human services etc. In this regard, it is important that the subdivision design of broadacre land into urban lots be done in consultation with both government and non government education providers.

The Department of Education and the main non-government education providers require the following provision of school sites;

- \* Primary Schools – one site for between 1,500 and 1,800 housing units for government schools
- \* Secondary Schools – one site for every four or five primary schools for government schools
- \* The provision of non-government schools is at an average ratio of one non-government primary school to three government primary schools and one to two for secondary schools.

Primary schools should be located on or near a local distributor road (preferably the local bus route), in the centre of the neighbourhood which it is intended to serve. Secondary schools can be located at the edge of a suburb provided they are close to a point where district distributor roads connect with the primary network.

#### **The Bunbury -Wellington Region Plan (1995)**

The Social Development general principle for the Plan promotes the integration of economic, social and environmental considerations and seeks to protect and enhance the quality of life for all residents, facilitate the development of community facilities and social services and provide for fair and equal access to opportunities as well as encourage community involvement in the planning process.

The Plan raises the concern of the Community and Family Commission that there is a perception among people that the loss of sense of community is one of the most significant factors contributing to social problems in contemporary society.

The Structure Plan (covering Greater Bunbury) which is a component of the Region Plan, has a primary objective for community facilities which is; "To provide for an improved range of conveniently located community facilities to meet the growing needs for education, health, cultural and recreational facilities". It is based on the Bunbury Region Plan that identified areas for future growth to accommodate a population of 100,000 persons by the year 2034.

The Structure Plan shows Senior High School sites (not primary schools) and these are the existing 5 (3 government) plus new sites at East Australind, Eaton, Usher, and Gelorup. In the case of Gelorup and East Australind provision is made for private school sites. Structure planning has therefore identified 4 new senior high school sites and two private senior high school sites.

*The Structure Plan is in the process of being converted to a statutory region scheme and hence the number and siting of Senior High Schools becomes extremely important. This is because if they are not shown, there is no formal commitment to the provision of government high schools for the future. Advice from the Education Department W.A. during the preparation of this plan is that there is now only a need for two future senior high school sites for greater Bunbury.*

### **Local Structure Plans**

These plans translate the broad statements of direction contained in the above State and regional documents into detailed site specific plans. The location of primary and secondary schools must be consistent with the many State Government endorsed objective and strategies that relate to social infrastructure and communities.

Since the adoption of the Greater Bunbury Structure Plan, several more detailed local plans have been prepared. The most significant of these are the Glen Iris Structure plan which proposes 2200 dwelling units (accommodating approximately 6,380 persons), the Usher, Gelorup, Dalyellup Structure Plan which proposes 3,000 dwelling units (accommodating approximately 8,700 persons), the Dalyellup Structure Plan that proposes 3197 dwelling units (accommodating approximately 9272 persons) the East Australind Structure Plan which proposes 2330 dwelling units (accommodating approximately 6757 persons), the North Australind Structure Plan that proposes 2,538 dwelling units (accommodating a population of approximately 7,552) and North Eaton Structure Plan that proposes 4,500 dwelling units (accommodating a population of approximately 13,000 persons).

The East Australind, North Australind, Eaton, Dalyellup and; Usher, Gelorup, Dalyellup structure plans are particularly important because they show the specific location of the future senior high school sites to service the long term needs of the Bunbury education district.

There are also several other local plans that together represent a significant future population. They include Binningup, College Grove, Pelican Point and Marlston Hill. Expansion in existing areas such as Australind, Eaton, Clifton Park, South Bunbury, Gelorup and the satellite towns and settlements also contribute significantly to the catchment population for schools.

By projecting the 1996 census data for Greater Bunbury at a conservative rate of 3% per annum, it is estimated that the current population is approximately 45,000 persons. The estimated population of the future urban areas that are the subject of detailed structure plans is 65,000 persons. When the expansion of satellite towns, special rural and rural populations are added, the Greater Bunbury area may reach a population of 120,000 persons within a time



frame which is well in advance of the early predictions of 100,000 persons by 2034 and the estimated growth of 25,330 persons from 1991 – 2011 in the 1995 Structure Plan.

### 3. SUMMARY OF KEY PLANNING POLICIES

- There is a strong emphasis on promoting, protecting, creating and enhancing a sense of community in living areas.
- There is limited reference to regional, rural and remote areas.
- Safety and ease of access in and between living areas are key criteria for viable communities. Particular attention is given to reducing the dominance of motor vehicles and providing for walkable neighbourhoods.
- There has been a significant change in the criteria for the provision and siting of primary and secondary schools. The catchment requirements for senior high schools have doubled.
- The W.A. Planning Commission has highlighted the need to apply criteria other than just the number of dwelling units as the basis for defining future school requirements.
- Alternative or additional uses are promoted for school infrastructure in established areas as the demographic profile changes over time. The character and amenity of established infrastructure is important.
- Planning policies for schools are directed at new residential subdivisions with limited reference to established urban areas.

### 4. PLANNING ISSUES

The loss of a sense of community has been identified as a major cause of social (and economic) problems. Policies to promote, protect, create and enhance public infrastructure such as schools have been endorsed by the State Government but have not been well integrated with other areas of public policy such as education.

The uneven distribution of population for Greater Bunbury caused by physical barriers such as the ocean, rivers, estuaries, the port, major roads and industry plus the historical settlements in different local government areas, make planning for senior high schools on a discrete catchment basis difficult. It is further complicated by input from outlying satellite towns and settlements such as Brunswick, Roelands, Dardanup, Burekup, Boyanup, Stratham, Binningup and the larger towns of Donnybrook, Harvey and Capel.

The Greater Bunbury Structure Plan shows urban growth areas to accommodate a population of 100,000 persons. Currently Greater Bunbury has a population estimated at 45,000 persons leaving future urban areas to accommodate another 55,000 persons. Current structure planning, consolidation of established urban areas and the outlying towns and settlements together may reach a total population of 75,000 or approximately 26,000 dwelling units. Even when applying the highest end of the new W.A. Planning Commission policy range (9000 lots per high school) there is a need for 3 high schools. If the lower end is applied (6000 lots per high school), 4 high schools are required. Under previous standards there would have been a need for 6 senior high schools.

The Education Department of W.A. has recently stated that it requires only 2 high schools to serve the future needs of the Bunbury District. This is a substantial change in the criteria for the provision of key community infrastructure that will have significant social implications. Research to substantiate these changes is not in any public document.

In addition to the under provision of senior high school sites is evidence of proposals to close schools and to progress planning for middle schools and a senior campus. Closure and redevelopment of schools is not supported in planning policies.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

There is a clear set of government planning policies that promote a sense of community through the location of key infrastructure such as primary schools at the centre of neighbourhood units and senior high schools serving several of these units. Many long standing community focal points for social interaction have gone, making schools a key to cohesive and viable communities.

Planning policies reinforce the importance of school infrastructure by promoting the retention of buildings and open space through changing demographics. Different or additional uses are suggested rather than closure and sale of assets.

In planning for the future education needs of the Bunbury District, the role schools play in community development must be explicitly included. As part of the planning process due consideration should be given to the location and number of schools, the demographic changes that will affect established areas and the use of schools, the extent and composition of catchments and, the potential for networking and resource sharing.

There is also a need to canvass the role communities can play in partnership with schools to address major social issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, youth suicide, alienation, crime and youth unemployment.

There has not been a set of planning criteria developed by the Education Department of W.A. or the W.A. Planning Commission which can be applied to meet regional, rural and remote education and community development needs. Standards are based on the Perth metropolitan area where growth has occurred in an even, ordered and concentrated manner. The extent of education infrastructure allows for a degree of flexibility in planning because there is some choice. This is not the case in areas even as large as Bunbury ( which is over 30 times smaller than Perth) where catchments can be extensive, fragmented and variable in population numbers and demographic profiles.

Current advice from the Education Department of W.A. is that there is only a need for 2 additional high school sites (Eaton and Dalyellup) in the Greater Bunbury area to service a long term population of 100,000 persons plus all the outlying areas. This is half the number that was required in the endorsed Greater Bunbury Structure Plan of four years earlier.

Research associated with the preparation of this paper has revealed that the population predictions for the Greater Bunbury Structure Plan are too low and will be reached earlier than estimated. The consequences of the Education Department advice and the revised projections may result in significant increases in school populations, increased travel times, changes in primary school locations in larger catchments, school closures and the loss of the (walkable) neighbourhood unit.

Social consequences could also be expected if a new high school is built as a junior high/ middle school (as is proposed at Eaton) or a senior campus is constructed (as is proposed at Edith Cowan University).

The mix of children, young adults and adults may be lost from neighbourhoods and the sense of community, which is regarded by many planners as fundamental to a healthy and resilient society, may as a consequence also be eroded or lost.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The contribution of ~~the Bunbury Region Planning Commission~~ MRAPI, in providing statistics and critical review is gratefully acknowledged.

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This paper presents information, issues and views on the importance of school infrastructure to communities. It is intended as a resource document to assist the Committee during the planning process. The views expressed may not be endorsed by relevant authorities.



## Appendix 20: Letter from LAEP Parent Representatives to the Minister for Education

### PARENTS AND CITIZENS BUNBURY, NEWTON MOORE AND AUSTRALIND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

October 12, 1998

The Hon C J Barnett M.Ec. M.L.A.  
Minister for Resources Development,  
Energy, Education  
19th Floor  
197 St. George's Terrace  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Sir,

#### LOCAL AREA EDUCATION IN BUNBURY AND DISTRICTS.

We refer to our meeting on October 7, 1998 and thank you for your time. We will summarise the history of this matter before putting our position to you as we propose to publish this letter.

We are the Parent Representatives of Australind, Newton Moore and Bunbury Senior High Schools.

We are unanimously of the view that the concerns we have about the local area education planning process and outcome to date must be addressed immediately.

On October 7, we presented the following to you.

1. Unanimous conclusions of all representatives  
We are unanimously agreed that:

- 1.1 Education outcomes can be improved in the Greater Bunbury region with better planning and co-ordination of resources.

We are confident that:

Subject choice can be improved with staff efficiencies  
Lower secondary schooling can be improved  
Resources can be better shared across certain schools

We would like to explore team teaching, co-ordination of time tabling, the better use of technology, better pastoral care, potential to share some resources with bodies such as TAFE, and many other strategies.

1.2 A well-designed local area education planning process is appropriate

1.3 The LAEP process applied to date in Bunbury is flawed and is unacceptable. The reasons are:

- \* The P&C's and wider community had not been adequately informed of matters being discussed (including school closures) during the drafting phase. Consultation in the early stages of any process is most important.
- \* There was no integration of primary, secondary and tertiary education values, issues and objectives. The Drafting Committee sought to determine shared goals and values in the Drafting phase but their requests to do so were refused by the District Director. Without shared goals and values real planning, effective collective planning is impossible.
- \* Data about schools provided to the Drafting Committee was inaccurate.
- \* The Drafting Committee was given no capacity to inform itself of the implications of various options proposed in the early phase of the drafting process. Without full exploration and research, considered and comprehensive debate was not possible.
- \* There was little connection between the Drafting Committee's input and the options arrived at.
- \* The lack of properly researched and crafted options is not a sound foundation for going forward into consultation.
- \* The planning was conducted in unnecessary haste. The Education Department's Executive Director for Strategic Planning informed the Committee after the drafting process that no funding was available for any major changes in the Bunbury District for at least five years.

- \* The Executive Director Strategic Planning informed the community there would be more time for consultation, however, the timeline for secondary planning has only been extended until April, 1999. This timeline is still grossly inadequate as the first drafting phase has not been accepted by the community and needs to begin again.
- \* The timeline for the primary drafting phase has been brought forward by 12 months - to be completed by December, 1998. This is totally unacceptable to the community.
- \* The drive for change came from the Education Department, not from the community. The community does not see radical structural change as necessary.
- \* The burden of proof for retaining the status quo (with enhancements) has been placed on schools and the community whereas the onus should be on the Education Department to prove that radical structural change is both necessary and desirable for achieving improved education outcomes.
- \* There was no social impact analysis, which addresses values associated with a sense of community, heritage and history.
- \* Other relevant and complementary policies of government (eg. drugs and alcohol, crime, sport and recreation, families, mental health, unemployment) were not considered.
- \* The Drafting Committee was not satisfied that it had met its terms of reference. See page 23 of the Framework. Issues set out in the Framework at page 23 including travel distance, travel time, pastoral care, the effect of change on students and the local community, the impact of proposed changes on staff, community and social issues, and the impact of change on the mixing of social groupings - were ignored.
- \* Minority and ethnic groups and aboriginal people were not included in the process.
- \* The impact on teachers has been trivialized. Teachers who express criticisms are being silenced and/or punished. This is occurring at a time when there is a shortage of teachers, staffing schools is very difficult and morale is very low. It is the quality of relationships between students and teachers, which has the biggest influence on educational outcomes, and yet the needs and concerns of the teachers are not being given due consideration.

2. A new LAEP Process. The new process should be in substance:

- 2.1 Elected representatives of all stakeholder groups, including students, meet as a Planning Committee. Special efforts should be made to have input of the Aboriginal population and any other significant minority or disadvantaged group.
- 2.2 They appoint one of their number as Chair.
- 2.3 The District Director is present as executive assistant to the Chair and collects information the Planning Committee may call for, and acts as Administrative Secretary to the Planning committee.
- 2.4 The Planning committee sets long term-shared goals and values for education in the local area.
- 2.5 The Planning Committee:
  - \* Has responsibility for the process and organization of meetings;
  - \* Calls for whatever information, experience and opinions it requires;
  - \* Deliberates in the manner it determines;
  - \* Formulates options which meet the criteria set out in the framework and the shared goals and values;
  - \* Prepares a report to the community in which it states the realistic options and if it sees fit, it states preferred option or options and grounds.
- 2.6 The Planning Committee consults with the broader community.
- 2.7 The Planning Committee re-convenes and deliberates to finalize its recommendations on the education plan for the local area and presents its report to the Director-General.
- 2.8 To implement this new process will comply with the statement at page 10 of the LAEP Framework: LAEP gives local communities the opportunity to become involved in planning and to develop local responses to local needs.

3. Structural Change

3.1 All stakeholders are dissatisfied with the separate middle school/senior campus models recommended and very strongly support the year 8-12 structure for the existing high schools.

3.2 It is on this last issue that we wish to address you in some depth because

3.2.1 - we have felt somewhat co-erced and manipulated to date

3.2.2 - we are concerned to let you know the extent to which the District Director's recommendations have failed to meet what we see as critical objectives in Local Area Education.

3.3 Our position on proposed structural change

3.3.1 We want to retain role modeling of year 11 and 12's for years 8 and 9 - it is in the interests of both the younger to learn and the older to contribute.

3.3.2 We want greater, not less interaction between generations at school.

3.3.3 We see continuity of relationships from years 8/9 to 11/12 as being critical for a significant percentage of the school population and important for the great majority of students - intellectually, socially, and emotionally.

3.3.4 The quality of staff student relationships is of paramount importance - this can only deteriorate in campuses where much larger numbers of students in one generation are taught.

3.3.5 We need more interaction between school and community and the 8-12 structure is better placed to permit community based school activities.

3.3.6 School identification, sense of loyalty and ownership provides a sound base for strength of character - this is easily built in the 8-12 structure, and easily lost in the middle school to senior campus transition.

3.3.7 The 8-12 structure is best placed to increase school retention rates because of the continuity of care. Pastoral care cannot be purchased by numbers, it comes with depth and continuity of quality staff-student relationships.

3.3.8 The 8-12 structure provides more flexibility, variation, skills maintenance, and intrinsic reward for teaching staff. Staff are our most important resource.

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4. Summary

- 4.1 We want a new process in which we have a genuine role in planning and recommending improvements for our local area education.
- 4.2 We wish to explore and plan a range of improvements in Local Area Education.
- 4.3 The only well presented options put forward for consultation were the preferred options of the District Director. These options ignored fundamental concerns
- 4.4 We are unanimously determined to reverse the current process, which requires us to justify the 8-12 structure.
- 4.5 The current 8-12 structure, albeit with many improvements, is well placed to meet the needs of secondary students into the next century.
- 4.6 The onus must be on those proposing such radical structural change to justify that change.

We invited you to respond. We understood your response to include the following:

1. Retention rates are not high enough (All the evidence that we the authors of this letter to you have heard suggests that a middle school/senior campus model such as in Tasmania leads to lower retention rates than the 8-12 structure.)
2. In Western Australia the school system is expanding.
3. The coming change in school entry age will mean that students will be six months older as they progress through the system.
4. There is a much greater emphasis now on vocational education.
5. All secondary and primary schools will be involved in local area education planning.
6. The local area education planning process was started urgently in some areas and there has been some room for improvement as the process has developed in various regions.
7. A range of different models have been chosen in different districts to date.
8. There are considerable advantages in middle schooling with team teaching and sub groups of 70 students per group and a better focus of resources on middle school student needs.

9. In one model there would be a senior campus where there would be a much stronger relationship between the university and the school.
10. On another model there would be a senior campus with an emphasis on vocational training with strong ties to industry.
11. Bunbury being the second most populace City in Western Australia, education must be strong in this area. There is no crisis in education in Bunbury. All the schools are successful. None are threatened with immediate closure.
12. You conceded that it may be best for the future of education in this district for the status quo to remain. However, what is best for today may not be best in five years time.
13. The problems faced by lack of schooling for the growing district of Eaton must be addressed urgently.
14. It may be that Bunbury High School could become a Senior Campus.
15. You refuse to abdicate responsibility for the LAEP process.
16. We made some points which you considered good and some which you did not accept.
17. You would consider some further minor changes to the process if we put it to you.
18. We can have more time if we wish in the consultation process.
19. You refused to respond in writing to us.
20. You are prepared to further consult with us from time to time.

**Our reply to your response.**

We are pleased that you have extended further time for us to consult in respect of this matter.

However, we consider that the drafting stage in the planning process that has now been completed was in large part a sham. Although the Framework for the LAEP purported to give all stakeholders in the local education community some input into the planning process, the drafting phase was driven by the Education Department to produce recommendations to restructure secondary education in the Greater Bunbury Region, breaking up year 8-12 high schools at Australind, Newton Moore and Bunbury and creating separate middle schools and a senior campus. We are now asked to move into a consultation phase to consult upon options and recommendations which had no significant input from the local community and did not include well-crafted viable options designed to best meet the needs of secondary students into the next century.

Furthermore, in rejecting our request for a new process you have sanctioned the sham process and steamrolling approach of the Education Department.

We are therefore left with no confidence that this next stage of consultation will be anything other than a further sham stage driven by the Education Department to achieve its obvious objective abovementioned.

We vehemently oppose the direction which has been taken by the Education Department and we fear that not only will the next two stages in the process led by the same departmental officer with your support, be a sham but that in due course the obvious agenda of the Education Department will become reality.

We consider that in sanctioning the process to date you are sanctioning the behaviour of the Education Department and we find therefore your response unsatisfactory.

We note your kind offer to further consult with us but we are persuaded that this would be valueless for our current concerns because you failed to address our concerns on October 7, 1998.

In those circumstances we are satisfied that our only option is to press for a change at the level of Premier and Cabinet or by change of Government.

We will not stand by and watch all of the senior members of our education community of Bunbury steamrolled, manipulated, and then silenced.

Furthermore, we do not understand why you would consider acceptance of a voluntary offer by the education community of Bunbury and Districts to prepare a plan and recommendations to you or your senior departmental executive for future education in our region, as an abdication of your responsibility.

Departmental officers can at all times prepare their own plan and recommendations.

Indeed we submit that by refusing to address and rectify a sham process you have thereby abdicated your responsibility.

Yours faithfully



## Appendix 21: Community Representative's Press Release March 11, 1999

### LOCAL AREA EDUCATION PLANNING – BUNBURY DISTRICT SECONDARY SCHOOLS CONSULTATION PHASE

A GROUP OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES WITHDREW FROM THE MARCH MEETING OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CONSULTATION COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER FURTHER ACTION AFTER THEY HAD REGISTERED DISSATISFACTION WITH THE PLANNING PROCESS TO THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WHO CHAIRS THE MEETING.

THIS FOLLOWS SIMILAR ACTION LAST YEAR WHICH RESULTED IN PUBLIC MEETINGS AT THE BUNBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND BUNBURY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND AN EXTENSIVE MEDIA CAMPAIGN WHICH OPPOSED THE PROCESS.

A LOCAL BARRISTER AND SOLICITOR [REDACTED] WHO REPRESENTS BUNBURY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL SOUGHT TO HAVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING AMENDED TO ACCURATELY REFLECT HIS STATEMENTS. HE AND OTHER MEMBERS WERE DENIED ANY DISCUSSION OR RESOLUTION IN RELATION TO THE MINUTES. MR [REDACTED] SAID;

"THIS IS JUST ONE OF A SERIES OF BREACHES OF STANDARD MEETING PROCEDURE. THERE IS A CLEAR AND PERSISTENT AGENDA BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA TO IGNORE THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES IN ITS PURSUIT TO ESTABLISH A SENIOR CAMPUS AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS. I AM CONCERNED THAT IF THIS PROCESS IS ALLOWED TO CONTINUE, THE BEST INTERESTS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL BE NEGLECTED OVER THE NEXT DECADE."

UNIVERSITY LECTURER [REDACTED] WHO SPECIALISES IN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND WAS AT THE MEETING STATED;

"THERE IS A DISTINCT LACK OF PROCESS IN THE WAY THE PLANNING FOR SCHOOLS IS BEING CONDUCTED IN THIS DISTRICT. THE COMMUNITY HAS REGISTERED STRONG OPPOSITION IN LARGE NUMBERS TO THE OUTCOMES WHICH HAVE BEEN DIRECTED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT. THE VIEWS OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, WHO HAVE BEEN DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED, HAVE BEEN MARGINALISED AND DISMISSED THROUGHOUT ALL OF THE MEETINGS FOR BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS."

LAST YEAR COMMUNITY CONCERN WAS FUELLED BY THE WAY IN WHICH OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE BUNBURY DISTRICT WERE DEVELOPED AND SUBSEQUENTLY FORWARDED TO THE DIRECTOR GENERAL AND MINISTER. IN THIS DOCUMENT THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR INCLUDED 4 OPTIONS TO CLOSE BUNBURY SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE. THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE DID NOT ENDORSE THE REPORT AND STATED THAT IT HAD NOT MET ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE. THIS, ACCORDING TO CHRIS PHILLIPS, REPRESENTS A FATAL FLAW IN THE PROCESS WHICH SHOULD HAVE PREVENTED ADVANCEMENT TO THE CONSULTATION PHASE.

ANOTHER COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE AT THE MEETING DESCRIBED THE PROCESS AS THE WORST HE HAD SEEN IN HIS 25 YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE. [REDACTED] WHO IS A PRINCIPAL POLICY ADVISOR AND TOWN PLANNER SAID;

"THIS PROCESS PURPORTS TO BE PUBLIC AND INCLUSIVE OF COMMUNITY VALUES AND SOCIAL IMPACTS. HOWEVER, THE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ON THE DRAFTING AND CONSULTATION COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN SILENCED BY NOT BEING ABLE TO HAVE MATTERS PRESENTED, DEBATED AND VOTED UPON. IT IS UNDEMOCRATIC AND OUTCOMES CERTAINLY ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF WHAT THE MAJORITY OF THE WIDER COMMUNITY WANTS."

[REDACTED] WHO ALSO ATTENDED THE MARCH MEETING SAID THE WAY IN WHICH MEETINGS WERE SET UP, CONDUCTED AND REPORTED MADE SURE THAT COMMUNITY VIEWS WOULD NOT BE HEARD. HE SAID;

"MEETING AGENDAS AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION ARE ALWAYS DELIVERED ON THE DAY OF THE MEETING OR AT THE MEETING, WHICH MEANS THERE IS NO TIME TO ANALYSE INFORMATION AND CONTRIBUTE TO AN INFORMED DEBATE." HE WENT ON TO SAY,

"THERE IS NO CLARITY AS TO HOW THE COMMITTEES MAKE DECISIONS. THE ONE AND ONLY TIME THE COMMITTEE WAS GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOTE ON AN ISSUE, THE OUTCOME WAS REJECTED BY THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR AS NOT BEING A BIG ENOUGH MAJORITY. IN THIS CASE THE OUTCOME WAS NOT THAT FAVOURED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT."

ALL COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES WHO HAVE CONSISTENTLY ATTENDED AND RAISED ISSUES URGE OTHER COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES TO ATTEND FUTURE MEETINGS TO REGISTER THEIR POSITION ABOUT THE CURRENT PROCESS.

MEDIA CONTACT:

## Appendix 22: LAEP Options Community Consultation Process

### SECTION 4

#### METHODS UNDERTAKEN TO PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE COMMUNITY AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO MAKE SUBMISSIONS

The Drafting Committee developed and agreed on the methods by which community consultation was to be carried out. The management sub committee put these methods into practice. In addition to the planned methods of consultation there also occurred incidental events to do with giving information about the options to the community. These are also documented here.

#### PLANNED METHODS OF PROVIDING INFORMATION:

- **Printed Information**

A document titled “*Local Area Education Planning, Opportunities for Secondary Education in the Bunbury Region*” was developed (see Appendix 2). This document was the Options Paper and comprised:

- brief information regarding the LAEP process of drafting options developed by a community representative committee, and the current aim of seeking community consultation
- a statement of values adopted by the Drafting Committee
- a definition of terms
- statement of the options developed for consultation, along with the overarching as well as more specific considerations recognised in developing the options
- details about how to get more information
- information on how to make submissions

This document was made available to the community via:

- distribution to all government schools in and around Bunbury
- distribution at all Public Meetings
- the Bunbury District Education Office
- publishing in one edition of one of the local papers servicing the Bunbury area (the papers were paid for this service)

- **Public Meetings**

Three planned public meetings were held in Bunbury, one at each of the three senior high schools. Each meeting attracted an audience of 60-70. The facilitators of the meetings were people who were independent, and who had high public profiles and extensive experience in local government. At each meeting a panel was present. The panel comprised six members of the Drafting Committee who had been nominated and had agreed to be on the panel. Each of the panel members was either an advocate or reserve advocate for one of the three groups of options.

At every meeting except the first, the audience was firstly shown a video developed for LAEP consultation. The video aimed to give objective information regarding the options, and how community members could make submissions. Then the three advocates addressed the audience in turn. Each of the advocates were allocated 10 minutes to speak to the audience regarding the option group they were advocating. After all three advocates had

addressed the audience, there was a 'Question and Answer' time. During this time members of the audience asked questions which could be answered by any of the six members of the panel. Printed information was also distributed at the public meetings.

- **Drafting Committee Members Reporting to Constituent Groups**

Almost all members of the Drafting Committee reported to the groups they represented. The members' reports included information regarding the options, the steps in the consultation process, and how community members can make submissions. The members in their reports were free to express a personal opinion regarding their choice of option.

- **Video**

A ten minute video was produced which aimed to provide objective and balanced information about the options developed for consultation, and how community members could make submissions. A local media group was utilised in the production of the video. One copy of the video was sent to each government Primary School, and five copies were sent to each Secondary School. The video was also shown at the second and third planned public meetings and at the Balingup public meeting.

- **Website**

A website was developed and the address provided in all the printed information. The website included all of the printed information. It also included direct links to the Education Department of Western Australia's website information regarding middle schooling. Included in this information was an EDWA report of case studies of middle schooling in WA. The website information also contained links to the National Middle Schooling Project, which provided on-line articles about middle schooling. Throughout the website information there were provided many references to other articles, books and commentaries on middle schooling and senior campuses.

- **Radio**

Three of the local radio stations were also approached, informed about the consultation process and invited to contact the District Director. One local radio station interviewed the District Director. The interview consisted of the District Director providing information about the LAEP process, the current stage of community consultation, and how community members could make submissions.

- **Television**

The local television station was approached and extended an invitation, in much the same manner as the radio stations. The television station interviewed the District Director. The District Director provided information in the television interview that was very similar to the information he provided in the radio interviews.

### **INCIDENTAL EVENTS THAT ALSO PROVIDED INFORMATION:**

- **Public Meeting**

A public meeting was held in Balingup in response to a request from the community there for further information regarding the options, and opportunity to ask questions regarding the options. The format of the meeting was very similar to that of the planned Bunbury Public Meetings. The panel at the Balingup Public Meeting was comprised of only three advocates.

The audience (of 12) was addressed by each of the three panel members, who then answered questions from audience members.

- **Newspaper Articles**

Three local newspapers were approached and given some information about the consultation process. They were invited to contact the District Director for further information and as a possible interviewee. All three papers contacted and interviewed the District Director. The information provided during the interview by the District Director consisted of information about particular options, the LAEP process, the current stage of community consultation, and how community members could make submissions.

The three local newspapers also published several articles about the options and LAEP community consultation in which some members of the Drafting Committee were interviewed. The Drafting Committee members commented on some of the options as well as provided information about the drafting and consultation stages of LAEP, and how community members could make submissions.

### **METHODS BY WHICH THE COMMUNITY COULD MAKE SUBMISSIONS:**

Submissions were considered valid only if the person making the submission provided their name and contact details.

- **Survey form submissions**

A survey form was developed for members of the community to use in making submissions (see Appendix 3). The form was distributed as a separate (A4) sheet enclosed within the printed information (A3) sheet. Thus, the form was distributed in one edition of one of the local papers servicing Bunbury, at the public meetings, through all government schools in the area, and was available from the Bunbury District Office. The time between when the survey forms were first distributed and the final date for submissions was a period of 29 days.

- **Written Submissions**

Community members were informed that they could make a written submission. These were considered to be pieces of writing or documents that did not constrain themselves to the options for consultation. Rather, the submissions addressed wider considerations pertinent to the LAEP process in Bunbury, and/or secondary schooling.

- **Telephone Submissions**

Community members were informed of a telephone number that they could ring at a specified time, in order to make a submission over the telephone. The opportunity for telephone submissions was during one day that was 17 days after the printed information was first distributed and two days after the last public meeting in Bunbury.

- **E-mail Submissions**

Community members were informed of an e-mail address in order to lodge a submission through e-mail.



# Opportunities for Secondary Education in the Bunbury Region



A consultation process is underway to improve educational opportunities for all secondary students in the Greater Bunbury Region.

The aim is to provide students with access to a better range of curriculum choices, specialist programs and quality facilities. This will be achieved through the improved use of current and future educational resources.

Six (6) options have been developed after extensive discussion in a committee of parent representatives, teachers and principals. Where the options have some similarities they have been grouped together.

**Group A** has two (2) options (Option 1 and Option 2). Both of these create a new neighbourhood Senior High School in addition to the current three Senior High Schools.

**Group B** has one (1) option. Option 3 would see Bunbury Senior High School remain as a provider for Years 8-12 with any or all of Newton Moore, Australind and Eaton High Schools combining as educational entities with their respective neighbouring primary schools to become K-12 providers.

**Group C** has three (3) different options. (Option 4, Option 5 and Option 6). All involve creating a mix of Senior High Schools and/or Middle Schools and a Senior Campus linked to Edith Cowan University/SW Regional College of TAFE.

Public comment on the six options is being asked for. Additional options may also be presented through the consultation process.

The Committee spent considerable time discussing values. Values are statements about those things which are considered to be good or better in the provision of education. The Bunbury LAEP committee adopted the core values of the WA Curriculum Framework as a guide to the delivery of secondary education in the district.

These values are:

1. A pursuit of knowledge and a commitment to achievement of potential.
2. Self acceptance and respect of self.
3. Respect and concern for others and their rights.
4. Social and civic responsibility.
5. Environmental responsibility.

## Definition of terms:

Some terms may be new. This section details what is meant by them.

- **Middle Schooling** is a way of teaching young adolescents aged from about 11-15 so they have more contact with fewer teachers. Teams of teachers are responsible for specific groups of students and often take them for more than one subject. With middle schooling, pastoral care is embedded within the organisational structure and function of the schools, rather than seen as separate and just for "at risk" students. Middle schooling is an educational philosophy, it is not about buildings.
- **Middle Schools** are buildings which accommodate young adolescent students. In WA this might be students in Years 7-9 but most likely it would be students in Years 8-10.
- **Senior Campus** is a building for upper secondary students, usually Years 11 and 12 but possibly Years 10 to 12. It aims to create a more adult learning environment.
- **VET** stands for Vocational Education & Training and is where students in upper secondary focus on workplace skills (such as hospitality, retail, mechanics) rather than on TEE subjects.

## OVERARCHING CONSIDERATIONS

- Outer Bunbury schools to be included in the consultation.
- Sufficient funds are allocated to upgrade the existing sites to provide a modern quality educational program.
- Professional development for all staff to implement *middle schooling* philosophy and curriculum framework principles.
- Planning for new schools should commence early enough to avoid schools with enrolments exceeding 1000.
- Donnybrook K-12 VET emphasis.
- Donnybrook and Harvey to provide a VET emphasis with VET programs for Years 11 and 12.

### **GROUP A:** **Four Year 8 to 12 Senior High Schools**

#### Option 1:

- Australind SHS - 8 to 12
- Bunbury SHS - 8 to 12
- Eaton - 8 to 10 (8 to 12 later)
- Newton Moore SHS - 8 to 12

#### Enhancement:

A broad based, democratic body to co-ordinate:

- Subject offerings between schools
- The sharing of resources between schools
- Transport of students between schools when necessary
- Planning
- The audit and refurbishment of existing schools
- VET across schools
- Student engagement through middle schooling

#### Option 2:

- Australind SHS - 8 to 12
- Bunbury SHS - 8 to 12
- Eaton - 8 to 10 (8 to 12 later)
- Newton Moore SHS - 8 to 12

#### Enhancement:

One principal and a management board to formalise the cooperation between the schools.

#### Considerations:

- ✦ Electronic delivery can be used to maximise subject choice within the smaller 11-12 cohorts at each school, although subject choice may be less than it could be at a Senior Campus.
- ✦ Neighbourhood high schools maximise local neighbourhood interaction and the building of a sense of geographic community.
- ✦ There is scope for positive role modelling and interaction between upper and middle schooling years. However, this role modelling is not always positive.
- ✦ Travel time for the majority of students is kept to a minimum although a Senior Campus would reduce travel for some students (e.g. those travelling from Donnybrook).
- ✦ There is no transition point / change of school between the middle and upper school years.
- ✦ This reduces the need for parents to be involved across two or maybe three schools.
- ✦ It doesn't require a new uniform/dress code.
- ✦ It removes the risk that the transition point will become a barrier for 'at risk' students entering Year 11.
- ✦ Middle schooling philosophy can be incorporated into the existing structure with appropriate resourcing, commitment and professional development of staff.

## **GROUP B:**

One or several schools to become K to 12 schools

### **Option 3:**

- Bunbury SHS remain 8 to 12
- One, two or three of the following K to 12 schools be established:
  - Australind SHS and Australind PS - K to 12
  - Eaton HS and Glen Huon PS - K to 10 (K to 12 later)
  - Newton Moore SHS and Adam Road PS - K to 12

### **Considerations:**

- ♦ Greater flexibility in the delivery of learning programs.
- ♦ Less transitions.
- ♦ Fewer transport issues.
- ♦ Size of campus structure and student numbers. (schools would exceed 1000 students).

## **GROUP C:**

A mixture of Senior High Schools, Middle Schools and a Senior Campus

### **Option 4:**

- Australind SHS - 8 to 10
- Bunbury SHS - 8 to 10
- Eaton - 8 to 10
- Newton Moore SHS - 8 to 10
- Senior Campus at Edith Cowan University/SW Regional College of TAFE - 11 and 12

### **Option 5:**

- Australind SHS - 8 to 12
- Bunbury SHS - 8 to 10
- Eaton - 8 to 10
- Newton Moore SHS - 8 to 10
- Senior Campus at Edith Cowan University/SW Regional College of TAFE - 11 and 12

### **Option 6:**

- Australind SHS - 8 to 12
- Bunbury SHS - 7 to 9
- Eaton - 7 to 9
- Newton Moore SHS - 7 to 9
- Senior Campus at Edith Cowan University/SW Regional College of TAFE - 10 to 12

### **Considerations:**

- ♦ There is likely to be improved curriculum choice for upper school students.
- ♦ A Senior Campus can provide a more 'adult' learning environment allowing students more flexibility with on campus hours, part time jobs, work experience etc.
- ♦ Change in teaching and learning styles and philosophy is more likely.
- ♦ The location near TAFE and ECU will allow for effective interaction with these institutions.
- ♦ More students would need to travel longer distances.
- ♦ Students in the middle school can begin to practice leadership skills earlier.
- ♦ It may be easier to implement middle schooling philosophy in the newly created middle schools.
- ♦ A Senior Campus would be likely to attract upper school students from other 8-12 schools in the region (e.g. Collie and in some cases, Australind).
- ♦ Students will need to make an extra transition between schools.



## HOW TO GET MORE INFORMATION

There are 3 ways to get more information:

1. An explanatory video is available for loan from your local Government school or District Education Office.
2. Visit our website attached to: <http://www.newton.wa.edu.au>
3. Public meetings.

Three public meetings are planned to give more information about the options and answer queries. The meetings are at:

- Australind SHS .....Tuesday 23 May 2000
- Newton Moore SHS.....Monday 29 May 2000
- Bunbury SHS.....Wednesday 31 May 2000

The meetings are scheduled to run from  
7.30 - 9.00pm.



## HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

There are 4 possible ways to have your say:

1. Complete the survey form attached and send it to the address shown on the form.
2. Make a written submission by **Wednesday 14 June 2000**. Send the submission to:

Bunbury District Education Office  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Bunbury Tower  
61 Victoria Street  
BUNBURY WA 6230  
(Ref: LAEP Consultation)

3. Make a telephone submission on **Friday 2 June 2000**. Please call ☎ 9791 0322.
4. Lodge an email submission by **Wednesday 14 June 2000**. The address is:

All responses will be used in preparing a final Consultation Report which will be presented to the Minister for Education.

### **Contacts**

For more information about Local Area Education Planning contact:

Source: Bunbury District Education Office. (2000). *Local area education planning: Opportunities for secondary education in the Bunbury region*. Bunbury, Western Australia: Bunbury District Education Office.